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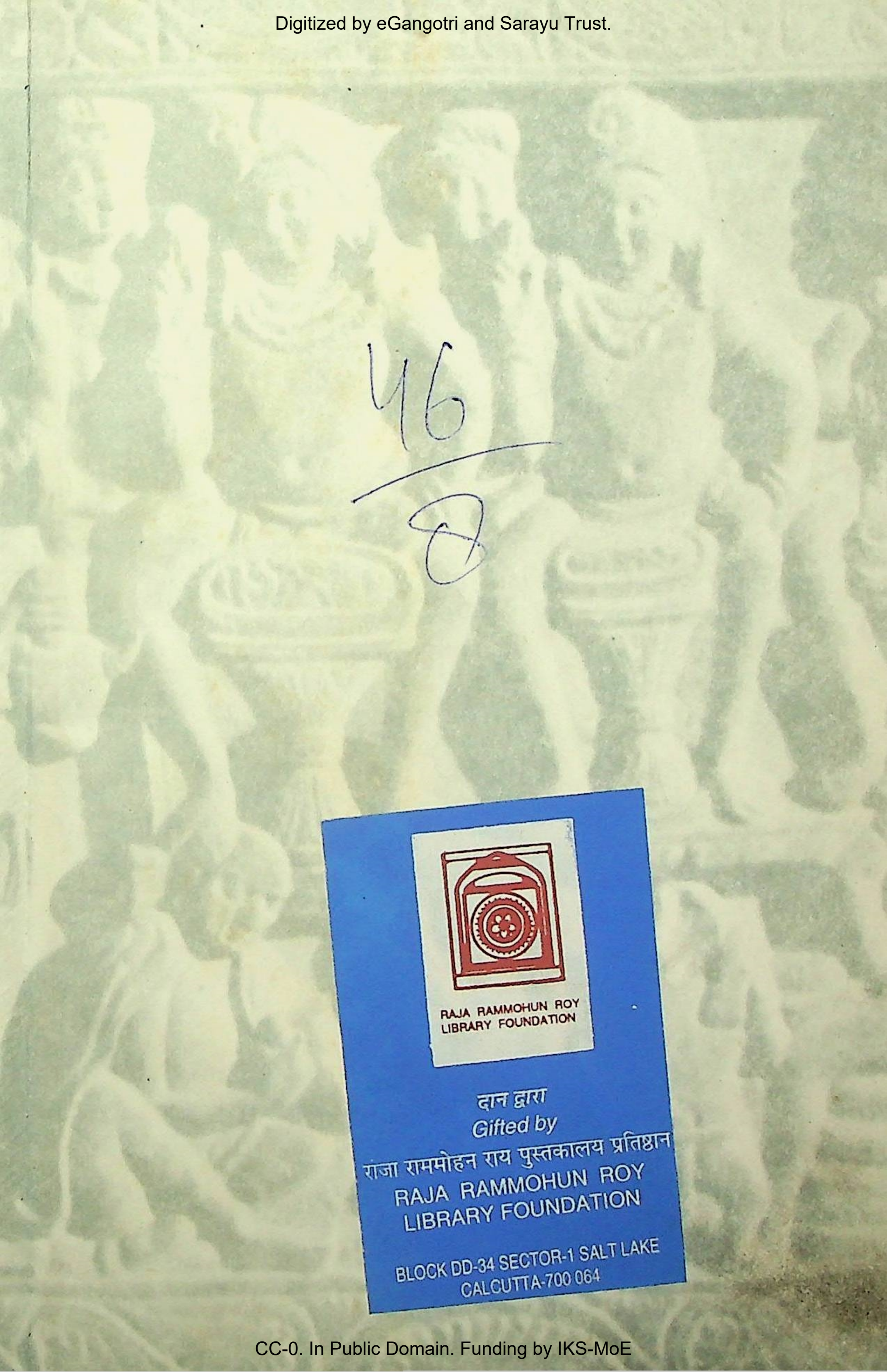

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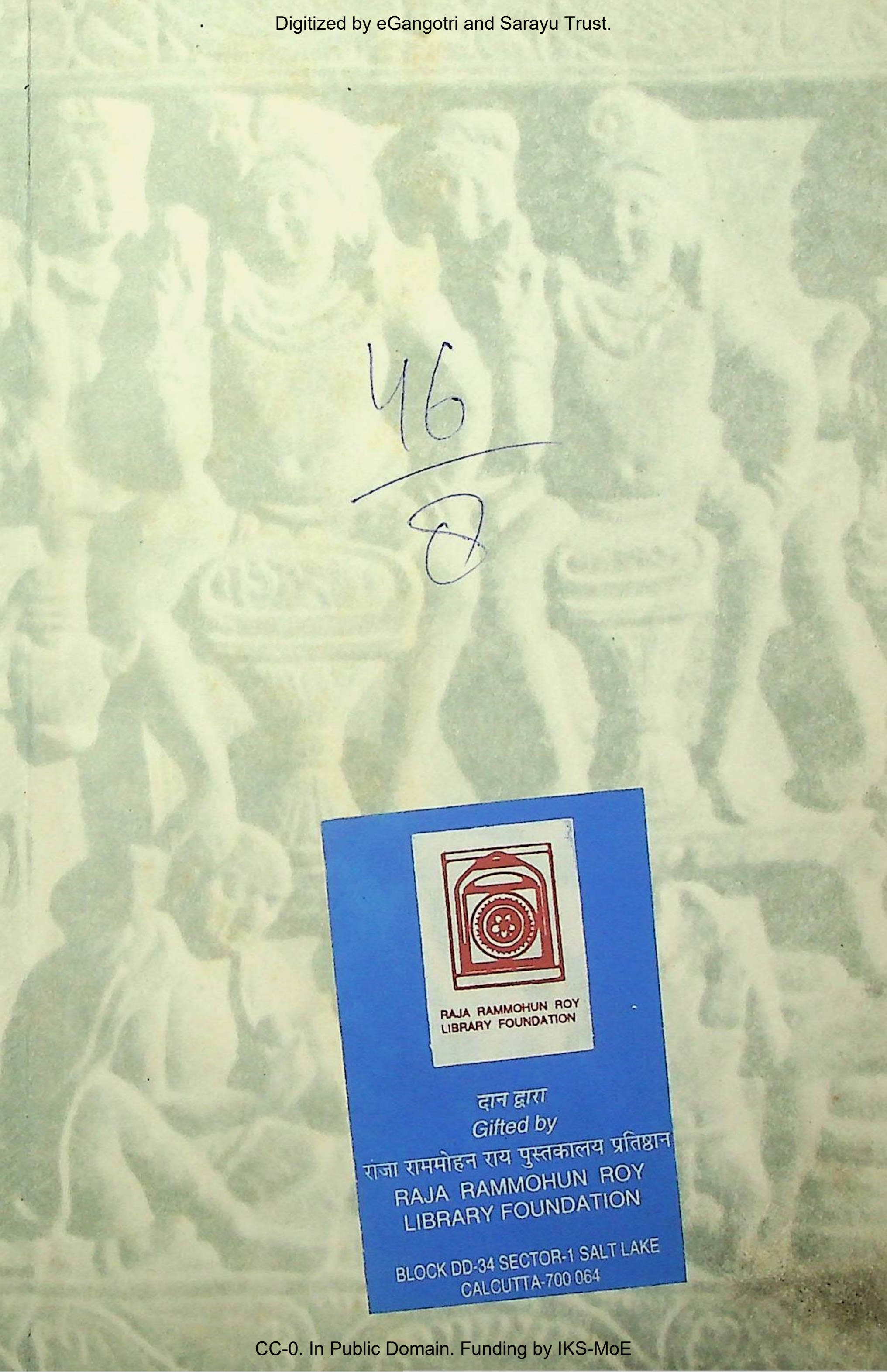

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The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, Mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi.

KĀLIDĀSA

Cat No. 7666
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K. Krishnamoorthy

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Bombay 400 014

Guna Building, 2nd Floor, 304-305, Annasalai, Teynampet
Madras 600 013

© Sahitya Akademi
First Published 1994

ISBN 81-7201-688-3
Rs 70

Typeset by Authors group, New Delhi-110016 and
Printed at Vimal Offset, Naveen Shahdara, Delhi-110032

"kathaṁcit kālidāsasya kālena bahunā mayā
avagāḍheva gaṁbhīra-masṛṇaughā sarasvatī"
At last, over years of study profuse,
I glimpse, it seems, a footing of a sort
In the current of Kālidāsa's Muse
-a stately, shining, splendid resort !

"tadidaṁ mandadīpena
rājaveśma-prakāśanam"
It is like showing in a dim lamplight
The beauties of a king's palace aright !

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Preface

If there is one name which stands out winning unstinted admiration of generations of scholars and literary critics from the east and the west, across the centuries it is certainly Kālidāsa.

Two centuries of oriental scholarship and scores of traditional commentators have left us a huge mass of material relating to Kālidāsa studies. But the ice surrounding his date and place has not been broken.

Specialists from the disciplines of technical sciences like astronomy, medicine, law books, philosophy, grammar etc. have tried their best in vain to shed new light.

It is only in the recent two decades that a new thrust is being made from the perspective of conventional love poetry in Tamil Sangam age and its interaction with Mahārāṣṭrī Prakrit directly and indirectly on Saṃskṛit love lyrics.

In fact, a closer study of Bharata's canons and rules might prove more fruitful in understanding and rating the true literary achievement of Kālidāsa.

The names, 'Vikramāditya' and 'Kālidāsa' have almost become common nouns in all regional languages of India like 'Solomon' in the west. Any patron-poet-king is Vikramāditya and any court poet of merit is Kālidāsa (Cf. "*kati va vikramādityāḥ kavi-dṛggocaram gatāḥ*" - Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣita, *Sabhārañjanaśataka*, 21).

Rājaśekhara himself was aware of three Kālidāsas even by his time (C. 900 A.D.). All the attempts of historical scholarship to identify him with an era-starter of the

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A reference to volumes of *Epigraphica Indica* and *Epigraphia Carnatica* will show dozens of Vikramādityas and Kālidāsas.

first century B.C. or of Candragupta II of the IV century A.D. appear to be off the mark. In fact, the references to Vikramāditya in *Kathāsaritsāgara*, *Gāthāsaptaśatī*, *Rājataraṅgiṇi*, etc. only confirm the suspicion that they are anecdotal accounts of a legendary patron of learning rather than any historical king.

We have also very perceptive and insightful essays on Kālidāsa coming from great creative minds of today like Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. They help us no doubt to recapture the very essence of Kālidāsa's vision and presentation of all-time values, ethical and humanistic, cherished in Indian culture.

I leave out of account here the numberless editions offering guidance and notes to students and teachers in the class-room studying Kālidāsa's works as text-books. I also do not have any high opinion of translations that we have today since no translation is a substitute for the original.

This treatise, very short as its span is, has no pretensions to sum up everything worth noting in and about Kālidāsa. Its aim is very modest. It is designed for a general reader today who may have little or no idea of the Sanskrit *kāvya* literary form. All the vast literature in Sanskrit on it and known as *alaṅkāraśāstra* is nothing but a continuous attempt of classifying the categories that go to make ordinary language into poetic idiom. It is in this that we see the perfection of genius, talent and learning, embodied in Kālidāsa. He had before him these traditional rules, but he made such a masterly use of them that it became the undoing of all imitators.

This work attempts in a humble way to analyse and appraise Kālidāsa's works through Indian eyes, i.e. of one well-conversant with Indian literary theories, in a language shorn of all technical jargon. It should lead, if nothing else, to *vāgarthapratipatti* or an idea of the artful speech wedded to elevated thought.

My thanks are due to my loving scholar-friend, Sri. H.V. Nagaraja Rao. and my daughter, Smt. Leela Prakash, but for whose labour of love, this script could not have been ready in my present state of health.

Some aspects which could could not be fully covered in the text have been amplified and appended as a second part of the treatise.

K. KRISHNAMOORTHY

One

Introduction

saṁskṛtaṁ nāma daivī vāk
anvākhyātā maharṣibhiḥ
— *Daṇḍin*

Sanskrit is a language divine
So the host of sages opine

The name of the language, viz., *saṁskṛtaṁ,* began to carry a special sense of 'beautified' or 'well-adorned' already by the time of Pāṇini, though in the earlier Vedic age, it had a sense of 'magical adequacy'[1]. Its very structure was forged with the aid of *sandhis* (euphonic combination), *samāsas* (compounds) and verbal and nominal secondary affixes to achieve sonorous verbal effects as well as new shades of meaning, from a poetic angle[2]. Thus a word was chosen by a poet for its sweet or striking sound-value as well as its rich meaning. The former become *sabdālaṅkāras* like *anuprāsa* (alliteration) and the *vṛtti* (structure) is described as soft, striking or harsh. As regards vocabulary, unlike other spoken languages in the world, Sanskrit has a provision for free coinage of new words by writers besides the words already found in a dictionary. Let us take an example. We have a number of words existing for 'water' *payas, jala, salila, nīra, ap, aṁbu, vāri, aṁbhas,* etc. By attaching an affix in the sense of 'giver', we get so many names of the cloud: *payoda, jalada, salilada, nīrada abda, aṁbuda, aṁbhoda, vārida,* etc. Instead of 'giver', we may choose to have 'holder' (*dhara*) and then another set of cloud-names is got: *payodhara, jaladhara, saliladhara, nīradhara,* etc. A third way is to compound it with the verbal sense of showering (√*muc*), and a third set of cloud-synonyms will follow: *payomuc, jalamuc,* etc. If the verbal sense is of carrying (√*vah*), the fourth set is had: *payovāha,* etc. With permutations and combinations of substitutions on either side, changing the shade ever so slightly in respect of colour or function, we can have easily hundreds of synonyms for every thing in nature. Sanskrit poetry exploits this inexhaustible wealth in an admirable way and in this lies the unmatched excellence of Kālidāsa.

Kālidāsa's eminence in delineating the various human sentiments (*bhāvas* and *rasas*) and their associate moods and feelings in their proper setting is also equally breath-taking. He is a prince of poets in effortlessly achieving the highest requirements of propriety (*aucitya*). These two aspects of his greatness—what he himself calls *vāgartha pratipatti* or perfection in the use of expression and matter — are praised with one voice by every Sanskrit poet who came after him. In fact, he is admired as *kavikulaguru* or mentor of poets[3].

The hundred and odd figures of speech found in Sanskrit rhetoric hang on one thread of imaginatively finding a properly corresponding 'another' to highlight the one on hand. It is called *upamāna,* sometimes *viṣayin*, at other times by terms like *aprastuta*, *anya*, *pratibimba*, *prativastu*, *arthāntara*, etc. This principle of poetic image makes the language of poetry entirely different from the dry spoken language. When Indian critics applaud Kālidāsa as a master of *upamā*, they really mean that he is the undisputed creator of lively poetic images of all kinds.

a. Kālidāsa's Literary Background

From internal evidence, we can positively say that Kālidāsa was indebted to the two great epics of India, viz., the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. We have also evidence to show that he must have read quite a few texts on grammar, philosophy, polity, erotics, prosody and purāṇas containing accounts of the dynasties of ancient kings. His mention of Bharata's, *Nāṭya śāstra* is quite conspicuous. Kālidāsa had made a deep study of it.

In the field of drama, we are told that he had predecessors in the field like Bhāsa, Saumilla and Kaviputra. A perusal of his works shows his familiarity with almost every art and craft, every line of study as commentators have shown. This reminds us of Bharata's saying that *nāṭya* is a meeting place of all arts and sciences, all theories and techniques and all pursuits and actions.[4] All this adds up to what the literary theorists call *vyutpatti*.

But, strictly confining ourselves to the literary art, from the epics to the ornate *kāvya* is a big jump. The only bridge that we find is in the works of a Buddhist preacher, Aśvaghoṣa. Indeed, there are numerous echoes between the two which scholars have noted.[5] But as we shall presently see, there is no power on earth to establish beyond a shadow of doubt who the borrower is. The history of Mahārāṣṭrī Prakrit begins almost with the beginning of the Christian era and it is not known either to Bharata or to Aśvaghoṣa. Kālidāsa writes in his dramas erotic and suggestive *gāthās* in pure Mahārāṣṭrī for the first time[6] and they are reminiscent of Hāla's *Gāthāsaptaśatī*.

Kālidāsa was writing for the delight of the learned in his time. It was a time in India when there was no other literature meant for the people at large. The classical rules of metre, grammar and poetics were unbreakable in his time; and while strictly conforming to these, he had to strike out a path for himself to attempt works which would at once distil the essence of Indian ethos and acquire a universal human appeal transcending time and space. It was a time when literature, religion, philosophy and life had not become separated from one another. To provide aesthetic delight in an apparently entertaining way and at the same time to educate humanity in the traditional ideals of Indian culture—these were the challenges facing Kālidāsa and a genius as he was, he rose to the occasion.

Only Kālidāsa could do this because he had drunk deep at the springs of Vedic lore. The Vedas have been revered for milleniums in India because they enshrine the great insights of a long line of *ṛṣis* or seers who were credited with spiritual perfection and prophetic or esoteric powers. All later systems of thought, all epics and purāṇas pay more than lip-service to this revealed tradition (*śruti*) of the Vedas. In fact six Vedāṅgas had been developed before Kālidāsa to assist a proper understanding of these texts handed down to posterity by word of mouth. In brief, the Vedic vision was at the root of all later tenets of Indian thought and reflections on life among which the following are outstanding:—

a. There is a triple universe (*triloka*), the upper of gods, the lower of demons and the middle of men.
b. This creation or being (*sat*) came out of non-being (*asat*) which mysteriously contained the demiurge. Creation is a continuous process of birth, death and rebirth.
c. The polarities of life and death, pleasure and pain, good and evil together constitute reality of the created life process.
d. Man's rebirth in a high or low estate is conditioned by his own deeds, good and bad, in a previous life. These are together termed as 'fate' or 'destiny' which cannot be altered.

e. Apart from the physical body, man has a soul which in essence, though identical with the Absolute, migrates from one incarnation to another because of its primordial ignorance of the eternal reality.

f. There are highly evolved souls like *ṛṣis*, who by their rigorous *tapas* or spiritual meditation realise the truth and attain perfection. They can curse and bless the commoners.

Kālidāsa inherited these beliefs as his cultural heritage and even subscribed wholly to the efficacy of sacrifices to gods in remedying human ills. His was a very catholic and universal mind which did not find any difference in the musings of the seers recorded in Upaniṣads or the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. The whole reformist movement led by the Buddha against orthodox religion did not make any impact apparently on Kālidāsa's mind.[7] His broad attitude points to a religion of the spirit which man must practice in his heart to fulfil the will of God, the divine order in creation (*dharma*). So man could share the divine experience when properly attuned.

b. Kālidāsa's Personality

The proverbial lack of historical sense in the Indian mind leaves us entirely at the mercy of internal evidence to whet our curiosity about even its greatest poet. Several legends and anecdotes, however, have gathered around him in the course of centuries. Most of them depict him as a man-about-town, very much alive to the charms of women and fond of entertainments, living the luxurious life of a court-poet. But these do not bear any critical scrutiny.

What we can surely glean from his work is that he must have travelled widely all over the length and breadth of the vast subcontinent with every river, hill and place of pilgrimage from the Himalayan heights to the southernmost Cape of Kanyakumari.

With all his vast learning, he is humble to a degree. He pays respects to his predecessors and pins his hope on the future of his nation to depend on the virtues of the ruling kings. He believes that a performance of appointed duty (*svadharma*) will be rewarded in this life as well as the next. He does not make invidious distinctions of high and low in society. He respects women for their multiple roles in life as mothers, daughters, sisters, friends and councellors besides their role as devoted wives.

Kālidāsa has an unfailing eye for beauties in nature and in man. In a word he can capture the living portrait of a moving chariot or a running deer, a flying sage or a weeping fairy, a blooming flower or a rising moon.[8]

How western prejudice and a colonial mind can function even in our times is illustrated in a paragraph of Benjamin Walker under the caption of 'Kālidāsa' in his *Hindu World.*[9]

> There is strong reason to believe that Kālidāsa was of foreign origin. His name is unusual, and even the legend suggests that it was adopted. The stigma attaching to the suffix *dāsa* (slave) was very strong and orthodox Hindus avoided its use. His devotion to the Brahminical creed of his time may betray the zeal of a convert.

Readers who know that we have names like Divodāsa of blue-blooded noble kings in the Ṛgveda itself, without any stigma whatever of a 'slave', and that esteemed merchants like Candanadāsa and esteemed dance-teachers like Gaṇadāsa do figure in classical drama, would never accept the unmerited charge that Kālidāsa was a foreigner and a slave and belonged to a slave-caste. To refute this charge, more serious evidence is unnecessary.

What Dowden said of Shakespeare can be applied to Kālidāsa with minor changes:

> Here in Kālidāsa's vocabulary are preserved for us as in a museum, the relics of our fore-fathers' lives and minds, their manners and costumes, their modes of salutation,

> their domestic economy, their field of sports and indoor games, their music, the furniture of their houses, their arts and crafts, their military weapons, their superseded laws, the lore of their schools, their faith in the virtues of heroes, their astronomical theories, their theories of man's physical and mental constitution, their belief in the supernatural, their tidings from fairy land, their omens of feat or hope, drawn from the conjunction of planets in the sky. All these and much besides are displayed in the rich museum of Kālidāsa's language.[10]

If Kālidāsa towers above all as the national poet of India, it is because he assimilates in himself a universal humanism with religious devotion and spiritual enlightenment which form the essence of Vedic vision and epic mythology.

c. Kālidāsa's Scholarship

The history of publication of Kālidāsa's texts begins from A.D. 1830, when Antoine Leonard de Chezy published *Abhijñānaśākuntala* in England. Its translation by Sir William Jones had already been published in A.D. 1789 Both offered the Bengal recension only.

The coming years saw the discovery of other recensions and versions of the play like the Devanagarı, Kashmir and Southern. The history of other texts is also equally a saga of new discoveries.

After the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Kālidāsa's works have come down to us in several recensions and needed to be critically edited according to the principles of classical text-criticism. We already have the critical editions of the epics from Poona and Baroda — thanks to the team work of Indologists of the East and the West.

But the credit of critical editions of Kālidāsa goes singularly to the Sahitya Akademi (National Academy of Letters.)[1] Among other notable attempts may be mentioned A. Scharpe's *Kālidāsa-Lexicon.*[2] This contains a critical edition of the text of all Kālidāsa's works in

Roman script and comes handy for those not conversant with the Devanāgarī and other Indian scripts.

The latest and one-volume edition of *Complete Works of Kālidāsa* is by Dr. Rewaprasada Dwivedi.[3] It is notable for its choice of happy readings.

A good study of Kālidāsa's citations in works on Indian poetics is in French.[4]

If we take into account all the studies, editions and translations that have appeared in the modern languages of Europe and of India, one bibliographical volume would not be enough; because the entries will easily exceed ten thousand. A beginning in this direction is seen in S.P. Narang's volume.[5]

d. Kālidāsa's Date

Kālidāsa's name became a legend, perhaps in his own life-time! No single anecdote has any historical basis or truth. It is enough if we record here solid facts unearthed by scholars out of the mass of speculations centering around him.

An inscription mentions him by name in A.D. 634[6]. Earlier than that is another inscription in which two verses show a clear imitation of *Meghadūta* II.1.[7] These give the *terminus ad quem*, of our poet's date. The *terminus a quo* is provided by the fact that Kālidāsa has written a play about the king Agnimitra of Vidiśā whose date was in the second century B.C.[8]

In my own studies I have come across a new evidence of correspondence (*saṁvāda*) in thought and word between an early Prakrit poet Vimalasūri and Kālidāsa. In *Paumacariu*,[9] verse 13 in the beginning reads -

savvannubhāsiutthaṁ
bhaṇanti kaiṇo jahāgamaguṇenam
kim vajjasūibhinne nariai tantū mahārayaṇe

Tr:-"Poets speak about the sayings of the omniscient master according to the merit of their study. Does a thread not pass through a great gem which is pierced already by a strong needle" ?

Is this not a clear echo of Kālidāsa's lines: [10]

> *atha vā kṛtavāgdvāre*
> *vaṁśe'smin pūrvasūribhiḥ*
> *maṇau vajrasamutkirṇe*
> *sūtrasyevāsti me gatiḥ*

This Prakrit poet has recorded the year of the completion of his poem as 530 after Mahavira which corresponds to A.D. 3. Scholars unnecessarily drag it to later times upto second or third century on subjective grounds. Why should we suspect any recorded date which is indeed a rare find in Indian chronology?

This takes me on to another pair of close correspondence of thought and word, between Aśvaghoṣa and Kālidāsa.[10a]

a) *"kanaka-valaya-bhūṣita-prakoṣṭhaḥ"* -
- Aśvaghoṣa[11]
"kanakavalaya-bhraṁśa-rikta-prakoṣṭhaḥ"
- Kālidāsa[12]

b) i. *budhaḥ parapratyayato hi ko vrajet*[13]
ii. *yatnena tu pratyaya-neya-buddhirvimokṣa-māpnoti parāśrayeṇa*
- Aśvaghoṣa[14]
mūḍhaḥ para-pratyaya-neya-buddhiḥ
- Kālidāsa[15]
iii. *parapratyayaneyabuddhitvāt*
- Āryaśūra[16]

The general trend of scholars is to explain away such echoes by assuming that Kālidāsa must have been the borrower. The built-in prejudices of scholars are responsible for imagining a history of the times we are talking of, in their own way. There is nothing in the Indian records to show that the Gupta period was the golden age. Nor was Ujjain a great centre of learning and culture in those days. Its glory was more of the past. All over Avanti, Vidarbha, etc., Śakas and other petty princes were ruling. Leaving that aside, does it stand to reason that a preacher of a heritical Buddhist religion and a new experimenter in Prakrit poetry with Jaina leanings, are both so important to Kālidāsa that he goes out of his way to borrow a simile ! To the Indian mind this appears preposterous because Kālidāsa is no less than the *avatar* of Saraswatī, the goddess of learning, in general estimation; and if he was rich in anything, it was the simile. The first quotation above relates to the simile of threading a gem pierced previously by the needle and the second refers to the mind of a fool who is nose-led blindly by the opinions of others. We find the same expression in Kālidāsa as well as Aśvaghosa and Āryaśūra. Readers should decide who might be the borrower.

This probability of Kālidāsa's priority to Vimalasūri on the one hand and Aśvaghoṣa and Āryaśūra on the other, takes us to the conclusion that he must have belonged to the first century before Christ.

This is according to literary considerations. Another line of apprpach has been developed latterly by western scholars to decide the antiquity of authors. It is the criterion of prosody. They analyse a *śloka* form by applying western prosody.[17] The last four syllables or half-verse of the first line of a *śloka* form a "foot" and it can be scanned in eight ways:

U	–	–	–	P	Pathyā
–	–	–	–	M	Molassus
–	U	U	–	X	Choriambus
U	U	U	–	π	Paean
–	U	–	U	T	Trochee
U	U	–	–	I	Min (Ionicus Minor)
–	–	U	U	I	Maj (Ionicus Major)
U	–	U	–	D	Diiambus

According to Indian scanning, taking only the first three syllables in the above foot, the last can be short or long, we may represent them as follows:

U	–	–	Ya-gana
–	–	–	Ma-gaṇa
–	U	U	Bha-gaṇa
U	U	U	Na-gaṇa
–	U	–	Ra-gaṇa etc.

The others are not commonly used. If we subject all such feet constituting the fifth, sixth and seventh syllables in each first-line of *śloka* in *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, Kālidāsa, Aśvaghoṣa, etc., we get the proportion of pathyās or normal units to deviations or vipulās. Ya-gaṇa is pathyā, while Ma, Bha, Na, Ra, etc., are variations. The proportion of variation is given in the table below:

Manu - 34 2 2 pathyās/M.264, X. 151, π 149,T.1119. (*vipulās*)
Śākuntala - 146 Pathyās/M.12, X. 8, π .7 and T.l. (*vipulās*)
Kumārasaṁbhava -274 Pathyās/M.14, X.9, π .14,T.l. (*vipulās*)
Raghuvaṁśa - 1017 Pathyās/M.30, X. 18, π .13,T.O. (*vipulās*)
Mālavikāgnimitra - 30 Pathyās/M.l, X. 1. π .2,T.O. (*vipulās*)
Vikramorvaśīya - 53 Pathyās/M.l, X. 2, π .2,T.O. (*vipulās*)

The result of this analysis is that while in a śāstra work like *Manusmṛti* the number of T type *vipulās* are more than a thousand, there is not a single T in two whole plays and *Raghuvaṁśa*. *Kumārasaṁbhava* has only one T. No *kāvya* writer uses it. So the proportion of *vipulās* to *pathyās* goes on decreasing and the 'chronological chaos' of Indian literature can be redeemed by an insight into the figures supplied by metrical analyses. It looks as if even in this analysis there is nothing to substantiate

Asvaghoṣa's priority to Kālidāsa since π is the commonest *vipulā* in both; and if it is due to the influence of Mahārāṣṭrī-Prakrit as supposed in all likelihood, Kālidāsa must have preceeded Aśvaghoṣa. For, it looks more plausible that Kālidāsa must have imbibed it from his Vidarbha homeland much earlier than Aśvaghoṣa who resided in the distant city of Sāketa. According to tradition, Kālidāsa is the pioneer of the *Vaidarbhī* or southern style in literature. Sachidananda Vatsyayan and Vidya Niwas Misra, say in their recent work, *The Indian Poetic Tradition* that Kālidāsa's date "is the first century B.C. and his provenance Central India."[18] With that we have to remain content until more evidence comes up.

e. Kālidāsa's Birth-Place and Province

Though a different head is given, the matter we have just been discussing under date runs into the question of his birth-place also. Latest research by western Kālidāsa scholars converges to the point that Kālidāsa first shows a lively influence of Mahārāṣṭrī Prakrit versification and that the Mahārāṣṭrī Prakrit erotic poetry heralded by the *Satta-saī* of Hāla was itself heavily influenced by the conventions of love poetry in early Sangam literature of Tamilnāḍu. G.L. Hart, in his book [19] upholds the thesis that Tamil Sangam literature of the first three centuries A.D. is related to classical Sanskrit literature because of the use of the same or similar poetic conventions. Examples of the messenger poem, the motif of separation of lovers during the monsoon, and the comparison of the sound of the wind blowing in a hole in bamboo to the noise of a flute — these are some of them. The messenger-poem does not occur in Sanskrit before Kālidāsa, but it is found inTamil Sangam poems.[20]

The motif of separation of lovers during the monsoon is an example of a shared motif. It occurs first in the

Indo-Aryan in the *Satta-saî*. A poem in that Anthology reads:

As I hear the thunder,
it is like the executioner's drum.

The same is the idea in a Tamil song.[21]

Another important theme that first appears in the *Satta-saî* which is traceable to Tamil is the *abhisārikā* or wanton woman who goes out to meet her lover at night. In *Satta-saî*, the heroine tells her lover:

O, ungrateful one! I still see
the village-mud I went through
to get to you on rainy nights.

In Kālidāsa's *Kumārasaṁbhava* (VI. 43), *abhisārikās* are said to find their way by the lights of herbs on bad days. Perhaps the most striking motif common to Tamil and Sanskrit poetry is the music of the wind in bamboo. Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* (Verse 56) and *Raghuvaṁśa* (II.12) have their parallel in *Akanānūru* (Verse 225).

Āryā and Skandhaka (or Khandaa), sometimes called Āryāgīti, are metres based on syllabic instants *(mātrās)* and they have their origin in Tamil metres. While *Paumacariu* is in Āryā, all the later Prakrit *kāvyas* like *Setubandha* are mostly in Āryāgīti metre. Kālidāsa's *naṭī* in the *Abhijñānaśākuntala* sings about summer in a Mahārāṣṭrī verse and so does the heroine compose a Mahārāṣṭrī verse in her love-letter. This culture of the Deccan was influenced primarily by Tamil sources which knows only two classes of oral poems, viz., *puram* and *akam*. *Puram* means 'exterior' and relates to the king as theme, while *akam* means 'interior' and relates to woman as theme. Mahārāṣṭra and Vidarbha bordering Tamilnāḍu must have acted as a bridge or carrier of Tamil poetic conventions directly into Mahārāṣṭrī Prakrit and through it into classical Sanskrit. The *Satta-saî* itself is an anthology which collects verses of a previous period as handed on in poetic tradition transmitted orally.

We have accounts of Kālidāsa visiting the court of the Kuntala King as his patron-king's ambassador. Kālidāsa never calls Ujjain a *rāja-dhānī*' (royal capital) though he loves it; and does not forget to call Vidiśā by that title and adds that it was well known far and wide. Scholars have hotly discussed whether this Kuntala means Kadamba Kingdom or Rāṣṭrakūṭa and Vidarbha and so on.[21a] The truth is that it was a general name in the literary tradition for all regions south of the Vindhyas. This fact lends support to the above hypothesis that Kālidāsa must have belonged, at least in the early years of his career, to the region of Vidarbha. The Rāmagiri of the *Meghadūta* is usually identified with Ramtek near Nagpur.

Prof. Lienhard also accepts Hart's thesis.[22] Though Hart dates this period of influence to the first centuries after Christ, there is nothing which comes in the way of its being some centuries before Christ.

The whole chronological picture of the literary scenario will have to be reconstructed on the basis of new material gathered from time to time. We have now evidences to show that one Subandhu, author of *Vāsavadattā-nāṭyadhāra-nāṭaka* (a drama involving the technique of a play within a play again within a play) was minister of King Bindusāra, son of Candragupta Maurya. This Subandhu is different from his namesake, author of the prose romance *Vāsavadattā*. He wrote this play to remove the five flaws pointed out in the Udayana Story of Guṇāḍhya's *Bṛhatkathā* by (Cāṇakya) Viṣṇugupta.[23]

Vāmana and Daṇḍin confirm this account:

so'yaṁ sampraticandragupta-
tanayaḥ candraprakāśo yuvā
jāto mantribhirāśrayaḥ
kṛta-dhiyāṁ diṣṭyā kṛtārtha-śramaḥ
kṛtadhiyāṁ ityasya subandhusācivyopakṣepaka-
paratvāt.[24]

Daṇḍin has a similar verse in his *Avantisundarī kathā* alluding to its performance before King Bindusāra:

subandhuḥ kila niṣkrānto bindusārasya bandhanāt
tasyaiva hṛdayaṃ baddhvā vatsarājo...[25]

Prof. A.K. Warder in his *Indian Kavya Literature* accepts the veracity of this tradition and alludes also to the reference in *Abhinavabhāratī* to this fact.

Kālidāsa slyly refers to Guṇāḍhya's story in his *Meghadūta*-

udayanakathākovidagrāmavṛddhān

And the story summarised in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* goes to suggest that Guṇāḍhya was forced to write in *Paiśācī* avoiding the three languages—Sanskrit, Mahārāṣṭrī and Apabhraṁśa—because he failed in a wager with Sarvavarman to teach Sanskrit to the Sātavāhana King Hāla in less than six mouths.

The picture boils down to this:

Guṇādhya-Viṣṇugupta
|
Candraprakāśa son of Candragupta
lauded as
|
patron of Minister and playwright Subandhu
|
Puṣyamitra of Paṭalīputra
|
Agnimitra of Vidiśā
|
Vasumitra of Vidiśā.

— All these kings running parallel with Sātavāhana rulers in Vidarabha-Mahārāṣṭra.

Kālidāsa imagines his Indumatī to be a Vidarabha princess. So is Damayantī of the *Mahābhārata.* Mālavikā again is another. All this speaks of the matrimonial inter-connection between Magadha and Vidarbha in the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era.

In this context, one anagram of the type called *viloma* or *gata-pratyāgata* (a verse which reads the same whether read from the first syllable to the last or backwards from the last to the first) is inscribed across the legs of an elephant in stone at Molakalmuru, Karnatak state. It was published by B.L. Rice as early as 1909,[26] but is yet to attract expert attention. It reads as under:

kaṁjaraṁpuratedraṁcaṁ
mahendālisadālikā
kālidāsalidāhema
candraṁ terapuraṅjakaṁ.

Rice translates it as follows:

> Lo, pleasure-giving Kālidāsa, thy soul-rejoicing poetry confers happiness, victory, wealth, and gives joy even to enemies; in this city thy compassion is conspicuous, ever the most highly esteemed among the company of poets!

This agrees with the fact already noticed of our having a number of persons with the name Kālidāsa in the Kannada country, in historical times. Kālidāsa, the poet, also must have been very popular here since almost all old Kannada poets—Nṛpatunga, Ponna, Ranna, Durgasiṁha, Nāgavarma, etc. sing his praise and pay tribute to him in the commencement of their works.

Rice also observes that the paleography of the inscribed letters on elephant-leg remind him of Asoka's epigraphs. This also points to Kālidāsa's date being anterior to the Christian era.

If we suspend our disbelief for a moment and accept the indebtedness of Aśvaghoṣa to Kālidāsa rather than *vice versa*.The fact that in the whole mass of later Indian literary works there is not a single reference even to the *kāvyas* of Aśvaghoṣa becomes a bit of strong evidence, though negative. The only indirect reference that has come to our notice is euphemistic. It says :

akārākhyo yatiḥ khyātaḥ
dvijaḥ pravrājitastathā/
sāketapuravāstavyaḥ
āyuṣāśītikastathā//[27]

Tr.: "A monk, whose name starts with A, a brahmin convert, a resident of the city of Sāketa and with a life span of eighty years..."

These are good enough details about Aśvaghoṣa as a man. But even this account leaves us entirely in the dark about him as a poet.

The rise of full-fledged *belle-lettristic kāvya* from an admittedly religious preacher is improbable. All the Buddhist poems that have come down to us are like beginners' exercises in literary quality and not one of them rises to the level of Kālidāsa or Bhāravi. This would not have been the case if Aśvaghoṣa were really a trend - setter.

All this implies that our literary history has to be written anew, removing the cobwebs of subjective speculations. We are not even sure of the historicity of what *Purāṇas* say regarding Śuṅga rulers of Vidiśā. According to Purāṇic accounts, we are told that Agnimitra ruled only for eight years and was succeeded by his son Sujyeṣṭha followed by Vasumitra after seven years. Vasumitra is not Agnimitra's son, but grandson. And in the line there are seven more who are overthrown by the Kāṇvas.[28] But in the play of Kālidāsa, Vasumitra is his son and heir-apparent. It is difficult to reconcile this anomaly if we take the play as historical cent per cent.

To treat the *Meghadūta* as an autobiography and to treat a play like *Mudrārākṣasa* as a historical piece are canards boosted up by pseudo-scholarship which we avoid the sooner, the better. For, we know that the former follows the convention of erotic lyric to sustain it; and there is not a single evidence showing the historicity of Rākṣasa or Cāṇakya's serving Candragupta as a minister. The *Mālavikāgnimitra* also is first and foremost a literary piece and its heroes are famous names to be glorified strictly according to the rules of a love-play. The love-situations therein are only ones concocted by imagination to suit the formula of a romantic comedy. According to the rules of Bharata, the concluding prayer or *bharatavākya* wishes well for one and all, the hero-king and the people. It does not mean that the hero is a contemporary of the playwright.

Thus our conclusion in these circumstances can only be indefinite and not very precise. The national poet of India, the trend-setter of *Belles-Lettres* in Sanskrit, Kālidāsa, could have lived only in the two centuries before Christ while Vidiśā was being ruled over by later Śuṅgas or Kāṇvas, who are characterised as *alpaguṇas* in the *Bhāgavata* passage referred to. That fits in with his bringing the account of Raghus to a close with decadence in the morals of royalty.

f. Works and Their Order:

It is customary today to indulge in speculations about the order of the several works of an author, even in the case of classical poets. But this was not the practice followed by Indian critics. The poets give us no hints of any kind and we are left with the works to be appreciated, each for its own beauty.

Apart from two ornate epics, the *Raghuvaṁśa* and the *Kumārasaṁbhava,* we have three drama-gems, viz., *Mālavikāgnimitra*, *Vikramorvaśīya* and *Abhijñānaśākuntala,* besides the superb lyric *Meghadūta*. Kālidāsa's authorship of all these rests on the firm ground of internal and external evidence.

But this is not the case with *Ṛtusaṁhāra* which has been ascribed to him, which modern scholarship has come to accept as genuine

There is not a single poet or literary theorist or commentator who confirms this ascription by citations from that poem. Many a love poem like *Ghatakarpara*, *Nalodaya* and *Puṣpabāṇavilāsa*, and many a devotional *stotra* like *Śyāmalādaṇḍaka* are ascribed to Kālidāsa by a very unreliable tradition. The fate of *Rtusaṁhāra* is no different. To imagine that it is a beginner's venture is not more than a subjective supposition. All the genuine works are organic wholes and bear a stamp of a poetic unity all their own. The structure of the *Ṛtusaṁhāra* is very loose and the vocabulary unmistakably bearing Kālidāsa's stamp and repeated in other works of his is conspicuous by its absence here. However, we shall give a short survey of the *Ṛtusaṁhāra* also in this study.

Kālidāsa conforms to the vision of the Vedic sages and the ideals of the epic poets, Vālmīki and Vyāsa. The standard way of life laid down in the law books of Manu and Yājñavalkya received respect from him and he tried in his own way to reconcile the claims of all the four *puruṣārthas*. He invented situations and characters who pursued these goals in spite of heavy odds and conflicts not only between good and evil, but also between two goods. Though his allegiance to the remote demand of spiritual perfection or release from worldly bonds was very much there, he did not believe in turning away from living a rich life that beautiful nature affords. He was a perfect aesthete enjoying the *rasa* of all cultural entertainments—poetry, drama, dance, music, painting and sculpture. But we should not forget that even in these apparent departures from ideal love, he is following a new conventional trend with its own rules of folk-romance typified in the eight-fold heroine types-*abhisārikā*, *khaṇḍitā*, *vāsakasajjā*, etc., and hero-types like *dhīra-lalita* and *dakṣiṇa*.

In all his serious works, the heroes and heroines are either divine, semi-divine or more than human. They cannot be judged by standards of realism. They have epic stature, supernatural powers and they show the heights to which a hero can rise and the odds that he can face heroically. They are never beset by doubt or indecision. They believe in the efficacy of blessings from spiritual masters, elders and gods to seekers with religious conviction. They overcome the vagaries of fate and emerge successful in the end because they fight on the side of good (*dharma*) and cannot be shaken by the forces of evil. In fact, in Indian religion and mythology there is no proto-type of Satan because, in the Vedantic vision, both good and bad shade merge into each other and only the Absolute remains.

The Indian view of life does not shut out enjoyments in life. It expects one to accept one's birth, station and vocation in life with an optimistic heart and to discharge one's allotted duty uncomplainingly. In fact, the poet believes that the delight from the enjoyment of arts is a way of realising the highest joy hidden within one self. *Rasa* and *ānanda* are two sides of the same coin.

Two

Lyric Poems

1. *Ṛtusaṁhāra*

We have seen in the Introduction that Indian lyric poetry has its own tradition of poetic conventions regarding the treatment of love among commoners, stretching over several centuries, first in Tamil and next in Mahārāṣṭrī Prakrit and finally in Sanskrit of which Kālidāsa seems to be the most outstanding representative. We have also discussed how they lead ultimately to eight-fold heroine-stereotypes recognised in Sanskrit literary theory. Side by side, we have different figures of speech which are so many types of bringing obliqueness to discursive speech. More than all, we have specific metres or prosodial measures which are particularly suited for the delineation of love.

Under all these counts, the *Ṛtusaṁhāra* fails to register anything outstanding. That is the reason why it was ignored totally by Indian literary critics of the past. But, many a western scholar gives it a respectability on account of his background. He generally thinks that here is a pure love poem wherein the poet distils his own private or personal emotion, and in a manner both spontaneous and pleasing, without yielding to the temptations of an artificial literary norm. This whole conception is wrong. Even if the first person be used by him, the poet is not pouring out his heart to his beloved in real life. In India there was no tradition of knights courting ladies with poems. On the other hand, the lyric is highly conventional; and even confirmed bachelors and ascetics in life could try this literary form as any other. There is a dramatic form called *bhāṇa* or monologue written by scholars who describe the charms of courtesans strictly according to the rules of *Kāmaśāstra*. They wrote according to rules and no one need suspect that they were moral rakes in life.

However, in deference to the established practice of noticing *Ṛtusaṁhāra* under Kālidāsa, we give below a few specimens, which are quite representative of the six cantos of the poem. There is no story or incident of any kind. It is all a description of the six seasons reckoned in the Indian calendar. The poet chooses to begin with summer and end with spring.

We have indeed in the two great epics and some *Purāṇas* examples of extended description of particular seasons like autumn and the rains. Literary theory recognises *Ṛtuvarṇana* or description of season as one of the eighteen heads of description in an ornate poem. But everywhere, the season has reference to the *rasa* or emotion of the hero, in harmony with the incidents arising out of the plot. And it helps in its own way to give a turn to the progress of events. In Vālmīki's epic, the autumn provides the right setting for the march of the monkey-army in quest of Sītā. The rains provide the atmosphere for the hero's unburdening the pangs of his heart, forcibly parted from his wife. The autumn in the *Bhāgavata* provides the required setting for the Rāsa-dance of Krishna and Gopis.

But we have no such background in this poem. It is a pen-picture of the changing beauties in nature which a young man in love feels like indicating to the beloved by his side. We have no clear indication in the text whether it is conjugal felicity or free love. The vocabulary is simple, though not always graceful; and style free from very long compounds and difficult metrical exercise. The flow of the short-spanned metres is indeed good. Yet, it is poverty of ideas and pedestrian nature thought which stare us in the face. We have no richness of imagination in the imagery given. They are all stock-in-trade, hackneyed; images abound like moon-face, lotus-feet, etc. There is no figurative turn given to these cliches which would enable them to have a life of their own.

Here are a few examples:

Summer :

With scorching sun and cooling moon,
Waning waters inviting a pleasant dip,
Fine at the day's close, passion stilled,
O dear one, here comes Summer.
(I.1)

Nights, the moon, puddles with shrinking waters,
Sometimes the fountain-jet, spraying water,
Gems and juicy paste of sandalwood,
Only these do people like now.
(I.2)

The original of the second line of the first verse and the first line in the second verse contain the expressions, *kṣatvārisañcayaḥ* and *kṣatanīrarāśayaḥ* translated here as 'waning waters' and 'puddles with shrinking waters'. To a Sanskrit knowing ear, these jar so much. No poet would use such an unidiomatic expression. The word used can only be synonyms meaning 'the sea' on the analogy of *ambhorāśi*, *vārāśi* and *payorāśi*. *Nīrarāśi* and *vārisañcaya* are not permissible usages, like *udakarāśi*, even to mean the sea. But here they have to mean pools or puddles because, in summer the sea-water does not shrink. Again, the word *kṣata* never means 'shrinking'. Its primary meaning is 'injury' or 'wound'. Such unidiomatic usages make its authenticity still more suspect.

Now to continue with illustrations:

A lovely terrace fumigated,
Wine bubbling at the woman's breath,
Melody of flute, all friends of passion,
—These do lovers enjoy in summer.
(I.3)

With their hips adorned by silk and girdle,
And breasts gilded by necklace and sandal
paste,

And hairs scented with bathing powders,
Women relieve the summer-heat of lovers.
(I.6)

Sweating all over their body-joints,
Youthful damsels now discard
Garments heavy and change over
To silken dress delicate.
(I.7)

By air which fans dipped in scent bestow,
By caresses of round breasts with shining
necklace,
By the sweet music of the well-strung lute,
Sleeping love is kindled into life.
(I.8)

In mansions white while women sleep,
Seeing their faces so gentle and sweet,
The moon gets excited in passion unrestrained,
And, pale sets at night's close, as if abashed.
(I.9)

The sensuality and cloying love depicted in all these verses is such that it cannot bring fame to any poet. There is no high-flown imagination at work, no inspired vision, no reflection on life. It is all one jumble of conceits used without poetic fervour. The only thing which can bear scrutiny is the proper handling of the figure of personification. Woman and nature become living prototypes exchanging various forms of beauty. But this was an age-old convention in India.

Rains:

The season of rains has come my dear,
With all the pomp and panoply of a king,
The dark clouds are his war-elephants,
Lightnings his royal flags,
And thunders his rattling drums.
(II.1)

With plumes outstretched, O love,
The pretty peacocks, long love-lorn,
Resume their mad dance,
With embraces and hot kisses.
(II.6)

Sweet maidens their lovers ravish,
With long hair decked with sweet flowers,
Reaching to the hips with glitter of pearls
on their breasts,
Their faces flushed with wine.
(II.18)

Autumn :

Look, here comes autumn like a charming
bride,
Clad in a white robe of flossy flowers,
With the full-blown lotus for her tinkling
anklets,
Her slender frame made lovely,
With the golden glow of ripening rice.
(III.1)

Like lovely damsels the streams move slow,
With shining girdles of sparkling fish, Pearl-
necklaces of white bird-rows on either
bank,
And rotund hips of stretching sands.
(III.3)

Like a beautiful maiden's face the lotus
smiles,
Caressed by the rays of the morning sun,
As the moon sets the smile fades from the
night-lily's face,
As of the young wife of a traveller far away.
(III.23)

Early Winter :

The cold season is shedding tears of dewdrops
on blades of grass,
Distressed at the weight of lovers on luscious
bosoms,
His favourite snug resort.
(IV.7)

Here is a poetic fancy which invites our appreciation, but the sensuousness of the whole picture comes as a disturbance.

Winter :

This is the season for the warm hearth,
with windows shut,
For basking in the noonday sun,
Warm raiment and tender maidens.
(V.2)

Spring :

Trees are in flower, lilies bloom in lakes,
Women turn wanton in passion,
And perfumes are wafted in the breeze,
The nights are pleasant and the days,
Everything is sweet in spring.
(VI.2)

The cuckoo is drunk with mango-nectar,
And kisses his mate with passionate fervour,
The buzzing bee on the lotus
Sings a love-song in praise of his beloved.
(VI.14)

The groves are lit by jasmines,
As radiant as a coquette's smile,
They tempt even an ascetic's heart,
from sense withdrawn,
Imagine their effect on young hearts.
Filled with fancies of love.
(VI.25)

Although immaturity and mediocrity are writ large throughout the poem, although verses do not have any artistic continuity or organic unity, the chiaroscuro of seasons is a good theme; but it is not enough to explain beauty in nature or beauty in woman. It all appears like an incredible dream or fancy of one who discovers in his beloved the beauty of all that we find in nature-birds, animals, plants, trees, rivers, hills, clouds, etc., and conversely woman's beauty in these. The poet seems to be in love not with his beloved or nature but with love itself, so to say. For, what haunts him is the idea of love as laid down in the rules. Inanimate nature has to be humanised and humans treated like inanimates to suggest the sway of passion. Such is the rule and the poet here has tried to follow it in his own mechanical way. Nor is there any occasion here for the depiction of either *anubhāvas* (consequents) or *vyabhicāribhāvas* (transitory emotions) in either of the love partners—thus rendering the *śṛṅgāra-rasa* under-developed, tepid and effete.

A mere statement of *vibhāvas* (antecedents including excitants) cannot call forth a sustained *rasa* in general and the erotic in particular. Hence, one need not regret if scholarship ultimately proves that this work is apocryphal.

2. *Meghadūta*

Lo what a change! From the bottom rung of physical love to its height sublime and even divine, from immaturity to perfection of art, from prosaic and conventional cataloguing of cliches to the heart-throbs of inspired passion—that is what one feels when after reading *Ṛtusaṁhāra* one takes up the *Meghadūta*. Here the untold pangs and longings of love-in-separation displace the monotony of love-in-union in the *Ṛtusaṁhāra*.

Here the yearnings and sorrows of the lone lover are unburdened to an intimate friend, unlike the one-way traffic we have in the other poem. All the kaleidoscopic moods of a love-lorn hero find their inspired utterings here, complete, with their objective correlatives of *vibhāvas*, etc. If time or season is personified as king moving in his majesty, as we saw in the other poem, it falls flat because there is no feeling to sustain the conventional image and the king's march serves no artistic purpose in the poem.

Not so in the *Meghadūta*. The poet speaks in his own voice only a few verses at the outset, just to introduce the love-lorn hero who is, first of all, more than human. He is a *Yakṣa* or demigod who lives only for love in a heavenly city, Alakā, set on the sublime heights of the Himalayas. He is a servant of Lord Kubera who is the master of the heavenly treasury and who is a devoted worshipper of the supreme Godhead, Śiva. All through the year, the moonlight from the crescent adorning the crest of Śiva illumines the nights of that city. This symbolises the cosmic order of *dharma* which holds together in a harmony sensual enjoyments, heavenly entertainments and supreme spiritual light in one thread.

Kālidāsa has inherited a philosophy of life in which sensual pleasure should be balanced with the demands of the moral order as well as the prescribed duty of his station in life. Not even a single lapse is permissible. Man or demigod cannot escape the inevitable consequences of dereliction, ethically or socially. This prefaces the entire poem. The hero is cursed for a year's separation from his wife for some lapse. Master of the suggestive word or *dhvani* as he is, Kālidāsa states it in the very first line of the poem in one word *svādhikārāpramattaḥ*.

As we will see hereafter, there is no poem or drama of his which does not centre around a curse in one way or the other. The curse motif may almost be taken as the key to unlock the plots constructed by his genius. We may just refer, here to the curses which underline the stories of Dilīpa, Daśaratha, Indumatī, etc., in the *Raghuvaṁśa*, and Urvaśī and Śakuntalā in drama.

The duration of the curse is a term of one year. That is because the demigod is thrown into the human world where time is reckoned in terms of a *saṁvatsara* or year, all the months and seasons being parts thereof. The human experience can be complete within that span of time—both sorrows and delights. More would only be repetitive. He has spent eight full months of restless gloom and frustration before he sights a cloud.

The Yakṣa has lost all his superhuman powers as a result of the curse, but not his memories of love. He is thrown down on a wild hilltop in the south and thus prevented from moving. The poet says that the Yakṣa built his cottage on that hill—which he was shifting again and again—as it had the holy name of Rāma and the streams there were sanctified by Sītā bathing in them. The implication is unmistakable that he was undergoing a period of expiation, leading a devotional life. The idea of *puṇya* and *pāpa* is very slyly brought out in the first verse itself. That is all that we have as the story-frame of the poem.

The poem is designed as an outburst of a forlorn lover, universally valid. The test of pure love lies in sacrifice and suffering. If love-in-union is a frenzy, love-in-separation is a madness no less of sweet memories and reminiscences of love. The Yakṣa speaks just a few words to the cloud in his madness welcoming him warmly as a friend and becomes silent about himself.

The addressed cloud is at the centre of the stage all through. The cloud is personified as a divine ambassador of Indra, changing forms at will, a friend of mountains, a husband of lightning, rivers and earth-goddess and a benefactor of life on earth. He is solicited to do a favour to the Yakṣa by carrying a message to his wife in far off Alakā on the topmost ranges of the Himalayas. Otherwise, he is afraid she might die of grief due to separation from him. The Yakṣa himself is emaciated in body and he can imagine on that analogy how his wife is.

The poem is so well constructed that the sorrowing Yakṣa in the beginning of the poem and the love-lorn wife towards the close of the poem are evenly balanced.

The messenger-poem is, as we have seen, a poetic convention. But what Kālidāsa has made of it with his inspired genius is astonishing. The world of epics and mythology, the beauties of the land that is India, its regional mountains and streams, its countryside and cities, the charms of women—innocent maids gathering flowers or bathing beauties, fashion girls of the city or elegant dancers, love-mad women hurrying on the roads at night to rendezvous or pining wives of travellers—all get particular attention in his description of the cloud's journey to Alakā.

Kālidāsa goes out of his way to dwell at length upon the attractions of the city of Ujjainī. Even here, it is capped with a reference to the temple of Mahākāla where dancers are devoutly offering their art in His service, though the harlots on the roads also have their place. This lengthy description making Ujjainī 'a fragment of heaven on earth' is matched by the description of Śiva who resides in the royal park of Kubera at Alakā. Ujjainī gets this special mention because it is the cultural nerve-centre of India; but the distinction of being the king's capital goes only to Vidiśā. Kālidāsa fully emerges here as the mouthpiece of India's cultural unity amidst diversity, as a spokesman of the inmost joys and sorrows of sublime love and as a votary of the multifaceted goddess of beauty.

Clear references are there to Lord Kṛṣṇa with Gopis, to Balarāma in particular, to Viṣṇu trampling down Bali, to Skanda, and, of course, to Śiva and Pārvatī, the favourite deities of the poet. The holy rivers are all named and their sanctity indicated. These references make the journey a holy pilgrimage of a devout religious man and the cloud is meant to deputise the Yakṣa who is in need of it to wash off his sin and resultant suffering. The sentiment of *vipralambha-śṛṅgāra* is essentially grief and akin to *karuna* or sorrow. It is this depiction of sorrow that touches the hearts of the readers most and makes for the aesthetic quality of *mādhurya* or sweetness (in diction, style and imagery). It is tragic in its human appeal.

While the Yakṣa is described as a prey to passion (*kāmī* and *kāmārtta*), the din of war is heard in the exploits of Arjuna and the competition of Skanda and Paraśurāma.

The poem is a celebration of not only sublime love of an ideal couple, but also of the beauties of the Indian landscape as well as the fairyland of the gods above. Feminine beauty in all its forms and variety is depicted to serve as attractions to the wandering cloud.

We have thus two worlds—one on earth and one imaginative. We have given an idea of the former. The poet devotes an equal length in the poem to depict the divine delights in the world of fairies. They are always youthful.Their entire time is engaged in the pleasures of the senses. The *kalpavṛkṣa* supplies them with wine and other luxuries. There is music and dance always to entertain them. The divine river's murmur lulls them to sleep. The couples do not know what separation is. They live for each other.

Set amidst these delightful surroundings, is the house of the hero which is almost a museum of all comforts and pleasing amenities. There is the water fountain, toy hillock and pets like the parrot and peacock. But in the midst of all this wealth and luxury—gold and gems form the floor of their halls—there is the picture of the sorrowing wife who has bid goodbye to all joys. She has no interest in her routine dressing even. Her hair is unkempt and dress soiled. She has cast aside all her ornaments and she is pining in body. Her only reason for existence is the hope of reunion. Like an ideal Indian *pativratā*, if she composes a song to be sung on the lute, she weaves in the name of her husband; or else, she will paint her husband's portrait. She is counting the days remaining by putting a flower day after day on the door-sill; or else, she is worshipping the deities praying for her husband's early return.

The message itself is very laconic. The vocative *avidhave* is itself suggestive enough. Her husband is alive. He is also counting the days for the day of their reunion. She should brace herself up and be prepared to wait.

With consummate literary art, the poet has conveyed in this masterpiece of lyricism, the ethical values which should not be transgressed by humanity at any cost. But the moralising is so indirect that one has to read between the lines even to notice it. It is not a document of personal emotion nor a celebration of romantic love as such. It is a gem of *vipralambha-śṛṅgāra-rasa* which sings of the pangs of universal humanity in its eternal quest of love everlasting. The suffering Yakṣa is redeemed of his sin by the realisation at the end that conjugal love does not diminish, but increases a thousandfold by a period of separation.

snehānāhuḥ kimapi virahe bhraṁśinaste tvayogā-
diṣṭe vastunyupacitarasāḥ premarāśībhavanti.

The music and majesty of the well-chosen Mandākrāntā (lit. slow-slepper) with two pauses within a line, most appropriate to the elegiac theme, has drawn a universal appreciation of critics. Four longs alternate with five shorts followed by two longs and two sets of ◡ □ □ which are nicely balanced stet dent cerreet with internal pauses:-

kāścit-kāntā/-v̆irăhăgŭrŭnā
svādhikārā prămattāḥ

Here are two specimens from the poem in H.H. Wilsons English verse-rendering: [29]

(i) The City of Ujjain

Behold the city whose immortal fame
Glows in Avanti's or Viśālā's name!
Renowned for deeds that worth and love inspire,
And bards to paint them with poetic fire:
The fairest portion of celestial birth,
Of Indra's paradise transferred to earth;
The last reward to acts of virtue given;
The only recompense then left to heaven.
Here as the early Zephyrs waft along
In swelling harmony the woodland song
They scatter sweetness from the fragrant flower,
That joyful opens to the morning hour...

(ii) The City of Alakā

There every palace with thy glory vies,
Whose soaring summits kiss the lofty skies;
Whose beauteous inmates bright as lighning glare,
And tabors mock the thunders of the air;
The rainbow flickering gleams along the walls,
And glittering rain, in sparkling diamonds falls;
There lovely triflers wanton through the day ,
Dress all their care, and all their labour play...

The motif of a love-messenger is not very new. We find it already in the epics. Rāma sends his message to the pining Sītā in Laṅkā through Hanumān. And a swan serves as the messenger of Nala's love to Damayantī. It is also a conventional conceit in the love-poems of the Tamils. But Kālidāsa's use of it as a fit medium for his imaginative flights and symbolism working at several levels reveals a creative art of the highest order.

Soon the poem captured the hearts of critics and attained a popularity unknown to any other work in India. This is attested by the number of imitations attempted by poets, virtually in every region of India in the centuries that followed. Their number exceeds fifty. In the modern period too, renderings of this masterpiece are seen in almost all the languages of the world.

Three

Ornate Epics

1. *Raghuvaṁśa (Raghu's Dynasty of Kings)*

> The poet in a golden clime was born
> with golden stars above,
> Dowered with hate of hate,
> the scorn of scorn,
> The love of love.
>
> Tennyson

The Indian *kāvya* was a new literary form which came into being as a result of the rules of theorists insisting on the aesthetic use of language as applied to the inherited *Itihāsa-Purāṇa* tradition of an earlier age. If narrative epic is the dominant note in the great epics, the story-theme is pushed to the background in the classical *kāvya.* Taking any slender story, the poet in the new manner of *mahākāvya* or ornate epic could write cantos and cantos of verse apparently on disconnected and arbitrary heads of description:—city, ocean, mountain, season, sunset, sunrise, celebration of a son's birth or marriage, spring festival, water-sports of charming damsels, moonrise, drinking bouts, love sports, coronation of king, etc. These are some of the set topics listed by theorists. How a creative mind can depict virtually all the nine *rasas* in such an artificial mode was something like a challenge. The rules of poetics were rigid and inviolable. The overall purpose of such a poem was to bring out the efficacy of a religious and cultured way of life without flouting any ethical norm.

The Indian *mahākāvya* thus appears to be confined to a very narrow canvas overburdened by metrical, grammatical and rhetorical rules which are most suffocating. But a genius that he was, Kālidāsa has not only achieved the impossible, but become an acknowledged guide in the field to others. He chooses as his subject for one of his works not any single hero but a whole galaxy of kings. For the other work of his, he chooses the marriage of the supreme divinities, Śiva and Pārvatī. With rare artistic insight, he makes a clean departure from monotonous and pedestrian style of the *purāṇas* which has no colour or pressure of feeling and weaves a form which combines ease with grace, elegance with eminence and tender emotion with excellence.

In the very beginning of his *mahākāvya*, viz., the *Raghuvaṁśa*, Kālidāsa gives us an inkling into what he sets out to do. His main object is to present before the reader's mind archetypal models of great heroes, great in stature, in battles, in prowess, in love, in renunciation, in munificence and in moral character. He uses skilfully the interaction of the supernatural with earthly affairs and removes the yawning gulf between earth and heaven.

Gods and goddesses, wise sages and saintly ascetics, rub shoulders and interact with the legendary heroes on earth, so much so that the action described becomes global in its vastness. It is the liesurely treatment of but a few select incidents in the careers of these godmen enrolled as heroes. The first king selected is Dilīpa who has access to heaven, and who is an ally of Indra. And the last of them is Agnivarna, who is of the earth, earthy. But for this last one, all the rest of them partake of both human and divine attributes. What provides an artistic unity to this assorted medley of some thirty rulers is their singular devotion towards the welfare of people, barring the last who is an exception. They discharge their duties without fear or favour and they are very religious in their lives. They meet out stern punishment on wrongdoers and are ever impartial in their enforcement of order. They are a terror to their enemies and friends of the needy.

We see the originality in Kālidāsa's construction of a story out of his own imagination in the case of some major kings, marked off from the rest. We appreciate this when we read the five cantos(10-14) about Rāma which is nothing but a running summary of the whole *Rāmāyaṇa* in *kāvya* form.

Kālidāsa did not have any such readily available source-material on the other kings that preceded Rāma's father Daśaratha or those that followed his sons, Lava and Kuśa. He had only strings of names and possibly also a mention of their sacrifices to gods. Kālidāsa very clearly envisages the four-fold values of life traditionally recognised in India and invents a story of a hero who succeeds in achieving one of these primarily without any opposition to the rest. Dilīpa's story is developed on the foundation of a curse motif. Unknowingly he deviates from his moral duty towards the sacred *Kāmadhenu* in one of his visits to *svarga* and rushes back to his queen to discharge the duty of *kāma*, as there was a dire need of a successor to the throne. This disturbs the moral order and brings down upon him the wrath of the sacred cow. He is cursed that he would be sonless until he expiated for his sin by rendering service to her daughter Nandinī in the hermitage of sage Vasiṣṭha, a preceptor of the King.

The wheels of destiny have started their rotation. Without any argument, Dilīpa and his queen lead a hermit-life in their dutiful service to the sacred cow, attending to all her needs, following her like a shadow.

Here Kālidāsa gives a new turn to his story. His loyalty and devotion are to be tested. It is a test on epic scale. One fine evening, when for a split second the king turns away from his charge to admire the beauty of the mountain scenery spreadout before him, he hears the cow's call for help. He finds her in mortal danger with a lion on her back. He finds that his arm is immobilised and he is helpless.

The lion speaks to him in a human voice. He is a servant of Śiva and Pārvatī keeping watch over a tree planted by Pārvatī herself and whoever comes within his boundary is his food as per a divine decree.

The ensuing dialogue illustrates for the first time in literary history the readiness of an ideal king to part with even his life if it can save his honour and pledge. He is readily exchanging his life for the cow's. Next moment, the apparition vanishes. There is no lion, but only the grazing cow, patting him and blessing him in all her grace.

The progeny of such a noble couple is Raghu, who lends his name to the poem as a whole. His heroism stands out most conspicuously, in almost three cantos, not only in the battle field but in the sacrificial hall and in the complaint-chamber of his palace.

When Dilīpa, having successfully completed on his own ninety-nine horse sacrifices starts the last, hundredth, he leaves the horse in charge of the heir-apparent, Raghu. Indra is averse to the successful completion of the king's sacrifice because he would lose his throne by that prospect. He steals the horse by his magic and is fleeing in the sky which is noticed by the guarding prince, thanks to Nandinī. He stops Indra and there ensues an exchange of hot words and then of weapons. The prince even dares the blow of the thunder-missile in his bravery. Indra compromises with him and promises the total success of the sacrifice.

Such is the preamble for the saga of Raghu's *digvijaya* or successful conquest all over the earth. Though such a conquest we come across in Vyāsa's epic, there is no *vīra rasa* or heroic sentiment in that account as we find in Kālidāsa. Raghu's armies go in all directions levelling down opposition and erecting pillars of victory. A poet that Kālidāsa is, he dwells in detail on the beauties of the lands that the army conquered. He has used it as a device to dwell at length on the vast stretches of the sub-continent of India, its manysided wealth and vegetation, its diversity of cultures and proudly shows, as in a museum, how the central sovereign authority is a must for the upkeep of it as a strong nation. It is this patriotic sentiment which justifies our regard for Kālidāsa as a singular national poet of India for all time.

Again, Kālidāsa falls back on his inventive resources to devise a scene wherein the world—conqueror Raghu—unlike historical conquerors like Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon—empties all his overfilled treasury on the welfare of his needy subjects. Such a general statement would not have the same effect as a dramatic dialogue which delineates feeling. Kautsa, a student who has completed his studies under a *guru*, insists on bringing him some *gurudakṣiṇā* or fee before taking leave of the *guru* and entering life. The *guru* is reluctant to receive anything from him, because he has been so pleased with the student's service. When pressed too much, he utters in a moment of irritation that fourteen crores of gold coins might be brought to him—an impossible stipulation ! Kautsa is not unnerved. He comes to Raghu and is stunned by the plight of the king reduced to penury, left with a single earthen bowl, out of all his riches already gifted away. He hesitates even to ask because his need is of a fabulous sum.

Raghu insists on knowing his need and coolly decides to get it at all costs, even by fighting with Kubera himself. But even without a battle, there is a rain of gold filling his treasury. But once again, there is an altercation between the student who refuses the gift of even a single coin in excess of the stipulated sum and the king who would not keep even a coin got for another's sake. These delicate touches make the account most popular to the readers.

Though a whole dynasty of kings is taken up for treatment, Raghu stands out as the most eminent among them, not only for the human qualities of his head and heart, but for an indomitable heroism in war and in protecting his people. If Dilīpa's heroism or *vīrarasa* is very much coloured by his religious devotion (*bhakti*) and ethical earnestness, Raghu's overweening prowess is matched by his humaneness which is an example of another shade of the heroic sentiment which is called *dānavīra*.

One of the most favourite genres of Sanskrit poets is *rājapraśasti* (panegyric). Every writer on rhetoric has filled his illustrative verses with this adolatory verse. Every writer of a royal charter or inscription adds to the quota. But the model for this vast literature, we find in the praise of Aja sung by bards. There is a punditic tradition that Sarasvati herself took the pen from Kālidāsa and wrote these five verses. Here is one of them:

Even the goddess of royalty,
Your constant consort,
is driven, as it were, to play the part
'of a deserted wife' when
You are lost in the embrace of sleep.
To end her listlessness, she amuses
herself by looking on the moon,
who bears some resemblance to
your face. But alas! Even that
moon is losing now that lustre!

In plain prose, it means 'Good morning'! But how many beautiful images run into one another to form this web of delicate fancy lifting the reader into a roseate fairlyland in which nature is humanised and divinized and myths come to be invested with novel shades of beauty, carrying, all the while, a symbolic significance altogether unique.

Kālidāsa's great genius is seen at work in his invention of a story which serves more than one literary purpose. First of all, all the *jānapadas* (kingdoms) in this vast country are brought together and celebrated equally under the guise of a *svayaṁvara* in which all the suitors of the day assemble from far and near. Secondly, the Ayodhyā prince Aja must outshine the rest in all desirable traits. Thirdly, a quarter must be found for the location of the tragic sentiment, *karuṇa*, without which an epic would be incomplete. The poet is ruled out from showing anything tragic in his heroes. So a heroine must fill the bill. It is the bride Indumatī who weds Aja. She is a celestial nymph cursed to suffer a life on earth for her indiscretion in tempting a sage. No sooner has she become a mother of Daśaratha, who is still a child, than her death comes like a bolt from the blue when she is sporting with her husband in the palace park. It is a flower garland from sage Nārada's lute, blown up by the wind to settle on her neck. The death is so sudden and shocking and Aja loses his balance of mind and laments piteously. This *vilāpa* or dirge is representative of man's eternal grief at the inevitable death which cannot be escaped. The sorrow overwhelms Aja and bursts forth in the sweetest strains of Sanskrit verse reminding us of the words:—

> Our sweetest songs are those
> That sing of saddest thought.

This episode lends a depth to the epic which is unique in this literary form. Aja is also shown as being inconsolable with all the wise hometruths regarding man's estate in the message he received from Vasiṣṭha. This is to make him court *anumaraṇa* (following a wife in death), a phenomenon unheard of in our culture-complex, on a par with *satī*. He waits only for a few years till prince Daśaratha can take over the burden of the kingdom. The Indian attitude to death is stoic and it is free from fears that heroes in Greek tragedies experience. In fact, Aja is happy with the re-union with his wife in heaven. Heaven hereafter is as real as life on earth.

Although Kālidāsa is summarising the *Rāmāyaṇa* story, he reveals his poetic mind in his choice of incidents to be described at some length. He utilises the story of Daśaratha's getting cursed on a hunting expedition to bring home the truth that even the best of kings fall by yielding to allurements like hunting and uxoriousness. His life is more a warning to kings than a success story. Kālidāsa exploits this occasion to exhibit his dexterity as a verbal craftsman. In a whole canto, he spreads out a rich fare of rhyming jingles, a *tour de force*, to please the critics of his day who set great store by such difficult exercises or verbal effects. Here are a few examples:

(a) sa nagaraṁ nagarandhrakaroujasaḥ
(b) śramanudaṁ manudaṇḍasamāśrayaṁ
(c) namahīnaṁ ahīnaparākramam

Kālidāsa shifts the scene of events from the earth to heaven, which is at once a compliment to his purāṇic tradition as well as his creative imagination, and this gives the lie to any estimate of his epic on the pre-supposition that it is a historic chronicle. The gods above are so harassed by the intansigence and intimidation of Rāvaṇa, the arch demon, that they go to Viṣṇu with a prayer for redress. If such devotional prayers from a new genre in Sanskrit literature, viz., *stotra*, it is due in no small measure to the influence of great poets like Kālidāsa in whose poetic ardour the prosaic form of the *purāṇas* underwent a seachange. In fact, it opens out a new spiritual dimension to Sanskrit epic which is not found anywhere else. Reading of such an epic will bring religious merit and ward off sins. The picture of the havoc wrought by the satanic Titan is as picturesque as it is arresting. Viṣṇu assures them of help and offers to take an *avatar* as Rāma to kill Rāvaṇa.

There is no need to dwell at length on the poet's summary of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story in five cantos. His own touches are very few and far between. For example, he can present even the ugly in a form beautiful, even death as an experience of love. Tāṭakā, the demoness, is killed by an arrow of Rāma. By a pun on words, the poet says that she was smitten by the arrow of love and that she betook herself to the dwelling of the Lord of life (Yama) identified as a paramour, and her smear of blood characterised as of red sandal paste. In strict application of *rasa* rules, such a presentation appears a flaw, since love and grief are mutually opposed emotions. But the lightness of touch and tone mitigate the gravity of the flaw.

The sentiment of wonder is an essential part of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story and it presses upon our attention more than once—in the birth of the heroes and Sītā in the contest of tuning Śiva's bow, in building a bridge across the ocean and the fire ordeal, etc. But it reaches its happy summit in the aerial flight of Rāma's party back to Ayodhyā.

This opportunity is utilized by the poet to describe the beauties of the stretch of the holy land of India—with all its holy places, rivers, mountains, forests—all bathed in a fresh and radiant light of romantic reminiscence. Rāma shows to Sītā the spots which they had visited earlier in a different situation. Perhaps this is the one occasion in the whole poem where an attempt is made to portray the ideal conjugal love of a couple who were as much human as divine, and which is completely divested of sensual elements.

The construction of the epic shows the poet's eagerness to portray his extraordinary heroes against a constant backdrop of sages and their spiritual power. The serene and tranquil atmosphere of the hermitages always beckon to the royal occupants of throne from a distance; and practically there is none who does not respond to the call of the hermitage.

It is this inner urge that prompts Sītā to wish for a revisit to the penance groves, and by a play of fate ends up in her tragedy. Kālidāsa's sympathy with her unfortunate lot seems to overcome his admiration even for Rāma. In a fit of self-righteousness, Rāma decides to exile his queen Sītā, though he knows that she is blameless. But the ideal woman bears her unmerited punishment very courageously. The poet has presented the situation in all its grandeur.

After Rāma, the kingdom is divided equally between the sons of the four brothers. At their head is Kuśa with his capital Kuśāvatī. Kālidāsa's imagination gives us one of its best flowers in the idea that the presiding goddess of the city of Ayodhyā appears in his dream and laments how she has been reduced to utter desolation after being abandoned by the king. Wild beasts are roaming the highways where charming women and the king's army would be moving. Instead of music, there is the ugly cry of wolves and jackals. This wail touches Kuśa's heart and he orders for the change of capital back to Ayodhyā. Again we have the incidence of the *karuṇarasa* very skillfully located in a personified city.

The mood changes and everybody is happy. The king has an excursion and enjoys the amusement of water-sports with the beauties of his harem. This also gives an occasion for the poet to give one of his best descriptions of summer, a description which is so lovely and contrasts with the banality of the same in the *Ṛtusaṁhāra*. What deserves particular mention is the fact that Kālidāsa's treatment of these—summer, watersport, etc.—are not loose appendages, but help the running narrative in their own way by being fused with the story in an integral way.

Though the charm of bathing women forms the apparent subject matter, it makes for the loss of the royal ring in water. It is picked up by a mermaid, a princess of the underworld and leads on to a threat from the mouth of Kuśa and the resulting marriage with that princess Kumudvatī. Along side of the purāṇic tradition, there was a third literary sourcebook for all poets, viz., *Bṛhatkathā* which was packed with such romantic marriages in fairy-tale fashion. Kālidāsa utilises it also here with great success.

The end of the poem reveals Kālidāsa's intent in writing it. In all the galaxy of hero-kings portrayed, the poet has not forgotten to show how in their variety of heroism or love-seeking, there was a constant running thread of loyalty to moral and religious values. None of them had put personal pleasure above the interests of the people. They all lived and died for achieving the universal happiness of their subjects.

The last canto presents the decline and fall of the great ideals. Agnivarṇa completely drowns himself in wine, women and other sensual amusements. Though the enemies did not throw him away, because of the fair name of his ancestors, disease took a heavy toll of his body and he died prematurely. What was left of the great line of kings was an unborn babe in the womb of the queen. That serves as a word of warning to all kings in future.

All the different poetic sentiments have found their reflection in the different parts of the poem as our survey so far has shown. But what is the main thread which makes for a unity of the whole? Apparently, the dominant place should go to heroism in its various forms, ethical, religious and military. But, Kālidāsa has touched the chords of serenity and pity that form an inescapable part of life. It almost appears that he, watching life steadily and seeing it wholly, was of the view that ideal life embraces both these aspects, the heroic and the tender. That is why the latter gets more emphasis in the beginning, middle and the end of the great epic, which has become a classic.

2. *Kumārasaṁbhava*

The Indian classical poet is one who strives for perfection, in his art as well as conception, never content with the real or the romantic. The soaring imagination of Kālidāsa chooses for his second epic the legendary theme of Śiva and Pārvatī coming together in marriage.

All the wisdom that Kālidāsa had imbibed from his readings of the earlier philosophical and sacred books, finds its embodiment in this grand and sublime theme. Śiva and Pārvatī are the purāṇic names of the Sāṅkhyan *puruṣa* and *prakṛtī* or vedantic *māyā* and *brahman* or Āgamic *Śiva* and *Śakti*. They are responsible for the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe. They enact a drama, as it were, of husband and wife, hero and heroine, a drama which is eternally continuing because they are above time. The purpose of their drama is to destroy the evil that becomes stronger than good in revolutions of cyclic time.

The purāṇic story—that Dakṣa's daughter and spouse of Śiva immolated herself in fire in her father's sacrifice unable to bear any insult to Śiva, that she was reborn as Pārvatī to parents, Himavān and Menā, and that she finally became mother to the war-god Skanda—has been so handled by Kālidāsa with his rich poetic imagery that it becomes the greatest or the grandest reach of human poetic endeavour.

Śiva is the perfect *yogin* and his adversary is Eros or the love-god. The pride of Eros is so great because he feels that his undisputed supremacy is established over all the three worlds. Neither gods nor ascetics are able to resist his command. Indra himself is his first victim. But in Śiva he finds his enemy. How Śiva burns him down to ashes by just a look is the main part of the story.

But life cannot go on without Kāma, because he is a part of the cosmic order. His wife Rati's plaints are heard and he is revived, though in a bodyless state. Pārvatī realises that her divine beauty is insufficient to enamour Śiva. She undertakes penance, purifies her heart to the highest point possible and then Śiva comes to her in order to test her worthiness for marriage. There is no place for Kāma at all there. It is only as a ritual for child-birth that marriage is needed. All the ugly associations of Śiva are detailed by Śiva Himself in the disguise of a student showing how He is not a match for her hand in marriage. He uses all His wits to dissuade her from her resolve and fails.

The divine sages are commissioned by Śiva who fix the marriage in due form, acting as messengers to her parents. The gods are pleased that their duress from the demon Tāraka will at last be over. If Kāma gave up his life, it was as a martyr on the side of gods. After marriage there is the honeymoon promising the birth of Skanda.

This epic is entirely unlike the *Raghuvaṁśa*. For one thing, there are no human characters at all. There is the highest Godhead, viz., Śiva, who is, most of the time, in meditation. There is the divine aspect of Himavān rubbing shoulders with his immovable mountain-form. Pārvatī the heroine, is as much removed from a human status as even divine characteristics, because she symbolises the eternal, inseparable consort of Śiva, the Absolute. What remains in the story is only the incident of the pride and discomfiture of the ubiquitous Kāma, who is dead outwardly, only to be regenerated as an inseparable adjunct of the cosmic order.

In purāṇic symbolism all the triple gods—Brahma, Viṣṇu, Maheśvara- are androgynous. Brahma and Sarasvatī, Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, Śiva and Pārvatī are inseparable couples, though for purposes of story-tellling, they are treated as separate. They are like the Vedic feminine counterparts of male gods, eg. Indra-Indrāṇī.

Kālidāsa's genius is so steeped in his purāṇic heritage that he has insights which we cannot figure out today. Scholarship is unable to decide how much of this poem he owes to his sources and how much is his own creation. The dialogues we have—between Menā and Pārvatī, the disguised Śiva and Vijayā the attendant of Pārvati and, Indra and Kāma—are completely in human terms which we can follow without any difficulty. Our appreciation of the poem will have to rest entirely on the concrete, crystalline and brilliant images of Beauty spread out in Nature and incarnated in feminine form. The grandeur of the greatest Overlord of all and His inscrutable combination of opposites, strike us with wonder, compelling our reverence.

The mountain-mass stretching across the entire land surface from ocean to ocean is like a measuring rod of the earth and conceals the divine personality of Himavān, the emperor of all mountains. He is a kinsman of Meru and a repository of all the precious gems known. Gods and demigods and their loving consorts have all their habitation there. He duly marries Menā and begets Pārvatī as daughter. By this event, most unusually, his sanctity and his splendour enriched—as the poet says—Like a lamp by its luminous flametip, like the highway of heaven with the birth of the Gaṅgā and like a learned man by his refined speech.

It would be the despair of a poet to describe the beauty of the heroine because it is inconceivably perfect. Kālidāsa has given a word-picture of her perfect limbs, by exhausting as it were all the standards of comparison spread out in that fairy-land. Her features assumed grace and proportion as in a picture by a master artist, or like the lotus unfolding its loveliness at the touch of the rising sun. Her feet surpassed the land-lilies in colour and softness, and her gait that of the swans. Her limbs were perfect. Neither an elephant's trunk nor a plantain-stem could stand comparison with her thighs.The three folds on her midriff were like the steps of Cupid. Her breasts were so shapely and buxom that not a lotus fibre could divide the two. Her arms were softer than the flower *śirīṣa*. One could not tell whether her necklace adorned the neck or her neck adorned the necklace. The moon's beauty does not coexist with the beauty of the lotus. But in Pārvatī's face they blended together.

This description of feminine beauty, limb by limb, adding up to a perfect whole become a regular literary convention in later literature and it is given the name *nakhaśikhāntavarṇana* (a description starting from toe-nails and ending up with the braid of hair).

Just like the curse-motif which plays an important part in all Kālidāsa's works, we have its counterpart in the boon motif which we see in this theme. If Tāraka's strength has grown to invincible limits, it is because of a boon of the Creator, a boon which even he cannot undo. The rise of the forces of evil will naturally be followed by a downfall in the divine scheme of things in its proper time. The birth of the war-god is the only remedy which the universe has to wait for.

The advent of spring as pictured by Kālidāsa is one of the loveliest in Sanskrit literature:

> While the sun, transgressing the ordained course, began to go towards the quarter guarded by Kubera, the south exhaled a scented breeze, like to a sigh of sorrow.
>
> The Aśoka tree at once gave birth to flowers and tender shoots, right from its trunk; it did not wait to be kicked by the feet of beautiful women, their anklets tinkling.
>
> Curved like the young moon, since they were not fully opened, the deep-red *palāśa* flowers seemed like the weals of nail-marks sustained by the forest-lands in their love-embrace with the spring.
>
> The black bee, following his loved one, drank honey from the same flower cup. And with his antlers the black antelope scratched the doe, who closed her eyes at his touch.
>
> From joy of love the female elephant gave to the male a spray of water scented with lotus pollen. The *cakravāka* bird honoured his mate with the gift of a half-eaten lotus stack.[30]

If Aja laments over the death of his wife in the other epic, the wife Rati laments here over the death of her husbanḍ. It remains unsurpassed as one of the most moving elegies in Sanskrit literature. His choice of a special metre, *viyoginī* accentuates the poignancy of the loss.

Rati swoons, shocked by the sudden death of Kāma and weeps so bitterly that she makes the whole nature weep with her.

> Whither could you possibly have fled
> leaving your mate whose life
> is bound with yours? Never have
> you wronged me so far, nor
> have I given you any offence.
> Why don't you respond to
> the calls of your beloved wife?

She imagines how all the graces of eager lovers would be wasted in the absence of Kāma. Wistfully she reminisces over the sweet moments she had in his company.

On seeing Kāma's friend Vasanta unhurt, her sorrow is re-doubled and she decides to immolate herself in a pyre. But, the mishap is prevented by a divine voice announcing her union with her husband when Śiva marries Pārvatī.

The scene is all set for the climax. Pārvatī has to change her course of life and undertake the most rigorous kind of austerity in order to please a god who is impervious to beauty, but accessible to spiritual *tapas* or askeisis. How she does not spare herself in this asceticism of hers is very touchingly brought out by the poet. She braves the heat and cold of the seasons without any complaint and persists in her self-chosen quest. When subjected to the most searching test by Śiva himself, she comes out successful by the genuineness of her experience of oneness in her spiritual love. We have the highest philosophy of India compressed into the form of a story. The highest god, by definition, should be bipolar, combining opposites of ugliness and beauty, poison and nectar, sexuality and spirituality. Kālidāsa is the first poet who brings it to readers as his supreme awareness in poetic form.

This leads on to the marriage itself which is the prototype for all marriages on earth. All the rituals are meticulously observed and it is shown how a marriage is a holy sacrament.

Though the poem contains many more cantos in some versions, scholarship has decided that Kālidāsa wrote only eight; and the last of these is an epithalamion or bridal song, the first of its kind in an epic. The honeymoon on the couple is described in such detail as might border on the obscene. All the rules of *Kāmaśāstra* (Erotica) are followed and the propriety of the whole thing has been questioned by Indian critics. We have to view this from two standpoints, viz., literal and symbolic. Immorality relates to life on earth and has no reference to gods. Pure poetry is judged by aesthetic standards alone. There is no vulgarity as such if the reader can distance himself from life while enjoying the poem *qua* poem. But the underlying symbolism of the supreme wisdom of India as reflected here is difficult to grasp. Kāma is regenerated at the time of marriage, not as an outward contestant but as an in-dwelling force. Īśvara has become Kāmeśvara after having reduced the killer Kāma to ashes. Kāma is not merely the craving for sex but also the evil force ranged against spiritual enlightenment as further clarified in the Buddhist mythology of Kāma as Māra. In this work, as Sri Aurobindo puts it:

> Kālidāsa combines sublimity with grace, height of speech with fullness and beautiful harmony of sound, boldness of descriptive line with magnificence of sensuous colour in a degree of perfection never before or afterwards surpassed or equalled in poetic literature.[31]

Four

Plays

Introduction

Kālidāsa's genius is as much evident in his poems as in his plays. We have seen that love occupies a central place, whether, he writes a lyric or an epic like the *Kumārasambhava*. All his three plays, again, centre upon love.

All that we can glean about love-plays before Kālidāsa is that they were either based on fairy tales or related to courtesans. Bhāsa's masterpiece *Svapna-Vāsavadatta* and Śūdraka's bhāṇa (*Padma-prābhṛtaka*) or monologue represent the two trends. Kālidāsa shows his knowledge of the former play by referring to *Samudragṛha, Svapnasamāgama* and dream-talk in this play. The plots hinge upon slender episodes with sudden turns and cross-turns promoting surprise and suspense and contrived mechanically with supernatural elements. The dominant *rasa* is coloured by the marvellous sentiment or the gay comic atmosphere.

Kālidāsa shows his soundness of judgement in divesting the *śṛṅgārarasa* from its association with *adbhuta* in his *Mālavikāgnimitra* (a semi-historical play) and with low comic *hāsya* in *Vikramorvaśīya* and *Śākuntala* (legendary plays).

Sanskrit drama is unlike the western in its primary concerns. It is more like the Japanese 'No-play' and the

Chinese drama where there is little action and all prominence is for gesture and inducted emotion. As many as ten types of plays are there to accommodate different tastes, but the best of them and most serious is *nāṭaka*. There is no room for tragedy in the serious *nāṭaka* form attempted by Kālidāsa. It is as much packed with poetry as any other form. But what distinguishes the *nātaka* most is its theatrical character. Within a short span of time, it has to provide entertainment and amusement by blending the elements of visual representation of actors, music, dance and painting. Hence the story is of the least importance. It is only like the wall that serves to hang audio-visual pictures of the several moods and feelings that precede and follow a dominant passion. Our books of rules analyse each one of the pictures and give them a status as a *sandhyaṅga* or organic part of the whole. Commentators highlight them. These combine the juncture of micro-points of story with micro-shades of *bhāva* and *rasa*. Characters come under broad types and they are less individuals.

Kālidāsa's achievement in this field as a dramatist of genius can be realised only against this Indian background. Let us see how he treats the one *rasa* of love in all its possible manifestations in the course of the three plays he wrote.

1. *Mālavikāgnimitra*

As we all know, there is no drama without conflict and the conflict envisaged in this play is between the natural pull of love and the self-interest of rival queens. The heroine Mālavikā has to undergo vicissitudes in her fortune for a period of one year, suffering the worst indignities as a chamber-maid of the chief queen, though a born princess herself, betrothed to king Agnimitra of Vidiśā.

This is not revealed till the end of the play; and makes for dramatic irony in winning the sympathy of the spectators while events lead up to a climax.

The entire play is an exercise in mythopoeic imagination. Popular folk-beliefs and nature-myths are so interwelded with man-woman fascination that the distinction between the animate and the inanimate, the moving and the immobile, the real and the fancied, vanishes altogether. Every pretty limb of the feminine form becomes a replica of some flower or leaf or tree, the wind sings a love-song over which the moon presides and the festivity of love is celebrated in all its glory.

Indeed the rules of Bharata are so farflung and strict that the characters have to talk a highly stylised language and behave in a prescribed way. The love comedy cannot at any time smack of vulgarity. A delineation of *śṛṅgārarasa* means a poetic version of the joyous life of a hero in the company of lovely women, a hero untroubled by anything like war or disease or pestilence and one who can justifiably take a short holiday in an otherwise busy royal schedule of duties pressing upon his attention.

It appears as if entire nature in its manifold manifestations of beauty through vegetation, landscape, etc., and women with their inexhaustible charms and graces, with one-to-one correspondence, can contribute to the *rasa*. This is very much reinforced if the aesthetic attitude towards the fine arts is introduced.

Bharata's hero of a love-play is required to be an asthete, an admirer of music, dance and sports, with a gentle, sensuous temper. In no earlier Sanskrit play, we have a hero whose involvement in the arts is dramatised. It is only in this play that Agnimitra, seeing the portrait of Mālavikā in a painting falls in love with her at first sight. May be highly incredible in life; but it meets the requirements of the rules best. How can a much-married king fall in love with a picture of a chambermaid? An opportunity is given to her to declare her love for him in person by a dance-performance arranged by the ingenious jester outwitting jealous queen's guard.

For this to come about, Mālavikā's dance-master has to quarrel with another dance-master who is giving lessons to the king's second favourite woman, Irāvatī. Here Kālidāsa shows his perfect dramatic insight in making Mālavikā enact the words of Śarmiṣṭhā to Yayāti in the epic in similar circumstances. Śarmiṣṭhā, though a princess, had become a slave of Devayānī, queen of Yayāti, and yet she was head over heels in love with him. Her love-declaration had attained an all-time significance as a literary leit-motif. As in a play-within-a play, Agnimitra and the queen are spectators of the stage-performance.

Lest one should mistake the hero as a womaniser without any evidence of heroism, the poet pictures him as a grand victorious monarch who has sent his son to punish the invading Yavanas or Greeks with an army accompanying the sacrificial horse of his father-emperor at Pāṭaliputra and also having despatched an army under another commander to quell the pride of an usurper on the Vidarbha throne.

In place of the curse motif we have here the motif of *siddhādeśa* or oracular prediction which is inexorable. The exiled Vidarbha prince has a sister, Mālavikā, who is sent by him to the safe custody of Agnimitra with his minister. The minister's widowed sister, Kauśikī, is to accompany the party. But, on their way to Vidiśā, robbers waylay them and the minister is killed. Mālavikā and Kauśikī get separated. In due course, Mālavikā is caught by an army chief of Agnimitra and sent to his harem as a present on seeing her artistic talents. Queen Dhāriṇī takes her as a chamber-maid, and also takes all precautions to keep her out of king's sight. After a while, Kauśikī becomes a nun and finds her way, as a learned matron, to this harem and becomes the Queen's friend.

All this we gather from what is reported in the play and nothing happens before our eyes. The attention of the playwright is wholly towards the romantic opera or musical extravaganza enacted as per rule by the king and the other women. It is to emphasise this aspect that we have the motif of an *Aśoka-dohada* or the barren Aśoka tree made to yield flowers by a gentle kick of a lovely maiden.

All the stages of love before marriage are manifested through the medium of the fine arts on the one hand and the responsive world of humanised nature on the other. They are so integrated that they become organic units of the whole and do not hang loose. It is said that if the Aśoka should show flowers within five nights, the queen will grant her inmost desire. The Aśoka does flower out and we are led to expect a happy ending.

Now we may turn towards the obstacles in the way of these lovers. The course of love never runs smooth; but here, it is a chamber-maid's love for a king countered by two jealous and powerful women. She has absolutely none to look for support. Kauśikī does not reveal her identity nor does she take any initiative to help the maid in distress. The king, her admirer sticks to his code of *dākṣiṇya* or gallantry in his dealings with women and does nothing openly.

Here two roles are added by the playwright. One is of Vidūṣaka, the Jester, on the side of the king and another, Bakulāvalikā, also a chamber-maid, on Mālavikā's side. These act as go-betweens and enlist the support of Kauśikī. The jester, with his tricks, makes the two dance-masters quarrel. The nun, pretending to be neutral, succeeds in making the queen agree, much against her will, to a performance by their two pupils, Mālavikā and Irāvatī, so that one of the dance-masters could be adjudged superior by the king, queen and the nun. This is how the first obstacle is cleared; and the two lovers have occasion to see each other to their heart's fill.

The troubles of Mālavikā begin with the intrusion of Irāvatī who bursts upon the scene of the ritual foot-kick to Aśoka as she eavesdrops and listens to the conversation of Bakulāvalikā and Mālavikā. The former is identifying the tree with the king, both clamouring for her tender affection. The attempts of the king and the jester to appease her anger fail. Even his humble prostration at her feet, the last remedy of the culprit protesting love, goes waste. The irate Irāvatī departs in a huff and reports the matter to Dhāriṇī and makes her throw both the errant maids into a dungeon. The guard has been strictly asked not to open the doors to anyone unless her own serpent-stamped ring is shown. This is the climax of the story.

The jester is more than a match to this challenge posed by Irāvatī. He simulates a serpent-bite for which a magic remedy involving the use of a serpent-stamped ring is held indispensible by the doctor and enacts the rising effects of the poison on his body before Dhāriṇī so successfully that she parts with the ring to him.

At once the jester effects the release of the two maids, conducts them to the *samudragṛha* ('Sea-view cottage in the park') and brings the king there for a secret rendezvous.

However, while keeping watch outside, the jester starts dozing and in his sleep cries "O Mālavikā! I wish you do excel Irāvatī".

As ill luck would have it, this is overheard by Irāvatī herself who is hurrying, after her temper has cooled down, to make amends by being good to the portrait of the king in the *samudragṛha*.

The sleeping jester is beaten with a stick by the maid of Irāvatī and he cries "Snake! snake". The loving couple come out to see what has happened and get caught redhanded by Irāvatī.

The love affair reaches its highest apogee of complication here. All avenues of a happy ending appear closed. The jester's plans have miscarried. The king is at his wit's end. Then there is a sudden uproar that the princess Vasulakṣmī is caught by a monkey and trouble is averted for the time being.

There is a sudden turn in Mālavikā's fate for the better. The king gets good news upon good news. His armies have scored success in all sectors. The Aśoka in the palace has put forth flowers.

The Vidarbha ally of the king has sent him two court girls as present in return for his aid. They recognise the identity of both Kauśikī and princess Mālavikā. Dhāriṇī wins everyone's regard by showing her generosity of heart in herself arranging for the ritual of the marriage of the loving couple under the Aśoka tree.

The three women characters which are major, though alike in most respects, are fundamentally different from one another. They represent three types, viz., the naive (*mugdhā*), the mature (*prauḍhā*) and the expert (*pragalbhā*). Their friends are also individualised. The jester not only discharges his conventional functions of deflating one and all, but helps in the action of the play directly. While his friend, the king loses himself in romantic fancies, the jester is down-to-earth in his sallies of wit and sarcasm. The nun maintains her respectability by her depth of learning and timely reactions, wounding none and commanding the assent of all. There is also a rule in Bharata that the success of a love-play depends on the extent to which the heroine is distanced from the hero and difficulties beset the fruition of the union.[32] This play conforms most even to that stipulation.

The resolution appears unnatural and contrived. But only a cultured audience, well-versed in the conventions of love (found in poetics) can appreciate it fully. Otherwise who will believe the story of a tree acting as a surrogate lover, awaiting on his behalf a touch from his lady's foot? Who can accept such a change of heart in the first queen as to arrange the marriage of a rival co-wife with her own hand? The heroic backdrop with clashing armies does not merge harmoniously with the light-hearted fun we are served so lavishly all the time. Victory in a harem-intrigue is brought to the king by a series of improbable accidents, while he is mostly passive, giving the impression of a carefree philanderer. Who can admire him for his brazenness when caught in compromising situations?

But these are difficulties of readers, who are not aware of the rules of the game. Sanskrit light comedy prescribes these very items and the Indian connoisseurs are aware of them. A gallant hero has to be just like this. And within the limits required by theory, Kālidāsa has shown what a creative imagination can do. The success of *Mālavikāgnimitra* will shine bright when compared with the dismal failure of its later imitations like the *Ratnāvalī* of Harṣavardhana.

It is to be taken as a musical or libreto in the fancied world of Arcadia (*Nandanavana*), where nature and love are bathed in beauty, without any intrusion from the hard world of reality. The hero is the ideal connoisseur who believes in the dictum that sternness in battle should go with gentility to women at home. What is more, the poet has hinted at the fact that the entire drama has to be regarded as a part of a religious *yajña*, a celebration of love in springtime. One would have to suspend his reason to admire the poetry that the play enshrines.

2. *Vikramorvaśīya*

From the human dream-world of conventional romance, Kālidāsa essays a flight to a world all divine. From a story of fun and frolic and plenty of sweet feminine charm, he passes over to that of unchartered depths in love, its ecstacies and agonies, with its fruit of progeny. Both the hero and the heroine are legendary figures, hallowed by tradition and well-known as paragons of Valour and Beauty respectively. Purūravas is the third in descent from the great Moon-god and the founder of a great race of rulers. Urvaśī is a celestial nymph born from the thigh of sage Nārāyaṇa as a challenge to the beauty of Indra's nymphs, who were sent to disturb his penance.

The source-books describing these mention their short-lived love leading to the unending distress of the king on earth. Therefore, we may take it that the entire plot of the play as we have is a fine product of Kālidāsa's lively and creative genius. The moral order of the universe which does not figure in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* enters here and the circumscribed precincts of the palace and the park, though present for some time, soon give place to stretches of heaven and earth combined.

Bharata haunts, as it were, Kālidāsa's mind. It is Bharata's play, *Lakṣmīsvayaṁvara* whose first performance is going on in Indra's theatre with sages and gods in the auditorium. Urvaśī appears in the role of Lakṣmī and when asked by her father whom she liked to marry, she utters the word 'Purūravas' in place of *puruṣottama*, because only a little while earlier, she had been rescued from the clutches of a demon, Keśi, by the might of the earthly king, who had fought a duel with the enemy in mid-air.

A celestial queen of beauty has fallen in love with the king because of his valour and that is how the play gets the name *Vikramorvaśīya*. She invites upon herself the curse of Bharata for her lapse, a curse which proves a blessing to her love-distraught heart. She has to go down to earth as the bride of Purūravas until he sees her son. The nymph loses most of her divine powers while on earth, but retains her memories intact. The first problem she faces is the rivalry of the king's earthly spouse. Before this incident of the curse, she has paid a flying visit to the king enjoying vernal beauties in his park with his jester, and conveyed her love-declaration to the hero in a *billetdoux*. She beats a hasty retreat to heaven to be in time for the staging of Bharata's drama.

The love-letter causes a flutter in the calm life of the hero. The indiscreet jester spills out the secret of the king's new love. It reaches the queen who comes out in a fluster to accost the king with the concrete evidence of the letter in her hand. The pleas of the king are turned down and we are left to wonder what happens next.

Queen Auśīnari, however, soon relents her stand and arranges for a religious worship to appease him, by sacrificing her self-interest altogether and withdrawing from the scene leaving him completely free to love Urvaśī who has arrived there by that time after being cursed.

Though ostensibly the road is clear for the romance of lovers, fate brings up most unexpected twists. They at once leave for their honeymoon to the famous pleasure resort of *Gandhamādana* where a celestial girl playing on the sands of the Ganges catches the admiring eye of Purūravas. This trifle becomes a sufficient reason to rouse the jealousy of Urvaśī, the impetuous nymph; and she rushes away from him and steps into *Kumāravana* where entry is forbidden to women. Her trespass results in her instantaneous transformation into a creeper.

Poor Purūravas cannot bear this stroke of fate. In his wretchedness and sorrow at the loss of his sweet heart, he loses his balance and becomes half-mad. The onset of the Rains fans the fire of his heartache. Like the love-lorn Rāma in the great epic, he begins to talk incoherently to the denizens of the forest as if they are human beings who can help him in his hopeless quest for the lost beloved. He thus addresses one after another the cuckoo, the swan, the bee, the elephant, the cloud, the river, the Aśoka tree, the stag, etc., that he comes across on his way and they are all united with their mates unlike this king.

The gods seem to pity his plight since he casually picks up a bright red stone and it turns out to be 'a Gem of Union' as promised by Pārvatī herself. He goes straight to a creeper and, noting its likeness to his beloved, embraces it. Oh! Urvaśī comes back to life. They return to the capital Pratiṣṭhāna and the king resumes his royal duties. By another quirk of fate, the gem is lost. It is taken away by a hawk which mistakes it for a piece of flesh. The king comes out with his mighty bow only after the bird has gone beyond the range of his arrow.

But the gem is soon recovered by his men who report that the bird was shot by one whose arrow-mark bore a signature.

It reads that it is Āyus, son of Purūravas and Urvaśī. Meanwhile, a lady-messenger from the hermitage of sage Cyavana ushers in the boy himself with her story that this child of Urvaśī cannot stay any longer in the hermitage because of his misconduct in shooting the bird. The king comes to know for the first time that Urvaśī had kept the news of her son's birth hidden from him mainly to prolong her stay with him and now it is time for her to depart. His joy at seeing the son is tinged with the sorrow of her parting. But again Indra sends sage Nārada to announce that Urvaśī might stay on with Purūravas for life since his whole-hearted help against demons is still needed.

The play is a bundle of supernatural, legendary and folk-tale elements. Such a mess would have become a blemish in any realistic drama. But it provides the highest scope for weaving a romantic dream. It is a dream which man has always wished for and never attained. Only as a love-fantasy we should approach it to appreciate its merits.

In Kālidāsa's vision, the bravest hero in battle against the mightiest forces of evil deserves the love of the fairest of nymphs. The ideal hero that he is, Purūravas will not shun the call of the forest in its proper time or duty towards the subjects or his good relations with his first queen.

Kālidāsa lived in an age when the inherent contradictions between a life of enjoyment and an ascetic way of life had been resolved in a perfect harmony by allocating their provinces separately. Enjoyment in youth was consistent with an ascetic life in old age. Similarly, as head of the harem establishment, the first wife's role was to humour the king by undertaking any kind of sacrifice. Polygamy among kings was socially approved.

When we compare Purūravas with Agnimitra, we will see how in majesty, in dynamic heroic feats as a trusted ally of Indra, his personality is much grandeur. It is by one such feat of arms that he rescues the heroine and wins her heart.

There is no room for any sages in *Mālavikāgnimitra* but here, there is a troop of them; Bharata and his group, Cyavana and Nārada. They have a part to play in the fortunes of lovers. It is neither as a play nor as a story that we admire the *Vikramorvaśīya*. It appeals to us most as an imaginative and creative experiment. The hero here is more a lover-poet than a soldier-commander. Away from the tumble of mundane activities, he lives in a dream-world of fancies, most beautiful and heart-warming.

Kālidāsa's powers as a poet of love and beauty finds perhaps its best expression in the scenes of this drama. For only here we have effusive outbursts of love-before-union and love-in-separation. The profoundness of the hero's sorrow which overflows in his madness finds a highly poetical expression in the fourth act which has no parallel in world literature. His art combines intensity of vision with a superb skill in fashioning an impassioned whole.

Urvaśī's character is transformed almost beyond recognition in the way she has been portrayed by Kālidāsa. According to legend, she is a courtesan without any constancy in her love or loyalty. But in the play, she is a modest and polite *pativratā* who talks less but cares all the time for others' feelings. She is a heroine possessing all the desired virtues in perfection. Her personality has drawn the attention of great poets like Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. In a word, Urvaśī may be described as an apotheosis of womanhood. Because of her, the play achieves in its epic sweep, room for provoking newness as well as uniqueness, lyric intensity as well as native vastness, convincing grandeur of conception as well as sweetness of style. All the old-world charms hallowed by legend are brought again for our enjoyment in all their glory and liveliness. The real theme of the play is not any individual, but universal man.

In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

> "Kālidāsa's presentation of Purūravas is not that of a poetic nature working out its own ruin; it is rather a study of the poetic temperament in a heroic and royal figure for no issue beyond the study itself. This is in accordance with the temper of the later poetry which troubles itself little with problems, issues and the rest, but is purely romantic, existing only to express disinterested delight in the beauty of human life and emotion and the life and emotion of animate and in-animate nature."[33]

The play thus serves as a lighthouse in our inmost quest for beauty divine through love in its highest reaches. Hence Kālidāsa may be described as a laureate of the divine love on earth.

A few examples might be given here for the sublime intensity of the romantic passion as visualised by our great poet.

Spring :

I study it tree by tree and leaf by leaf
This courbouc's like a woman's rosy nail,
But darkens to the edge; heavy with crimson,
Yon red Aśoka breaking out of bud
Seems all on fire; and here the carvy mounting
Slight dust of pollen on his stamen-ends
Clusters with young sweet bloom. Methinks I see
The infant honeyed soul of spring, half-woman,
grow warm with bud of youth.
(II.7)

Mountain :

Mountain ! O tell me where my lady hides ?
In deep ravine-cleft ? On your sloping sides ?
Or dwells my love where Love's own god resides,
Within your forests ? Or perchance she rests,
Her curved form on your round, shelving breasts?
(IV.26)

River :

The rippling waters her frown-rippled brow;
Their strung-out chattering birds -
her girdle-string;
Clutching the slipping streaking foam—her dress
Loosed as she fled in passion—even now
Stumbling on stones. Is this her loveliness
Bewitched to water, still unpardoning ?
(IV.28)

Creeper-cum-Heroine :

A slender plant, curved shoots all wet with rain,
Like her lips washed with tears;
Void of all ornament — this is no season

Now, to put on fresh flowers;
Like her, still brooding, ever rapt in silence,
Reft of the noise of bees;
Even thus, she who in jealous rage,
then spurned me,
Now in remorse may mourn.[34]

(IV.38)

W.B. Yeats[35] observes:

> The poet should be content to find his pleasure in all that is for ever passing away that it may come again, in the beauty of woman, in the fragile flowers of spring, in momentary heroic passion, in whatever is most fleeting, most impassioned as it were, for its own perfection, most eager to return in its glory.

This is like a very penetrating and perceptive commentary on our classical theory of *rasas' niṣpatti* or evocation. Viewed in this light, Kālidāsa's universality in exploring the emotion of love in all its bearings holds us in thrall.

3. Abhijñānaśākuntala

In the consensus of the world's scholarly criticism, this play is a masterpiece. Traditional Indian judgement takes the form:

kāvyeṣu nāṭakaṁ ramyaṁ
tatra ramyā śakuntalā

At the head of western judgement we may put this encomium from the Oxford don, Monier Williams (written in 1876):

> Indeed, no composition of Kālidāsa displays more the richness and fertility of his poetical genius, exuberance of his imagination, the warmth and play of his fancy, his profound knowledge of the human heart, his delicate appreciation of its most refined and tender emotions, his familiarity with the workings and counter-workings of its conflicting feelings, in short, more entitles him to rank as 'the Shakespeare of India'.

Equally well known is the poetic tribute to Kālidāsa paid by the German masterpoet Göethe. He sees in the *Sākuntala* the flowers of spring and the fruits of autumn, that which charms and that which entrances, in a word, both earth and heaven. Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore has been equally profuse in his encomiums; and philosopher Radhakrishnan adds his own voice to this chorus of praise.

We have seen in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* the conventional way of royal love confined to the harem and earth-bound. The king does not infringe the moral codes or religious duties. In the *Vikramorvaśīya* we have a pure fairytale with unexpected interruptions and solutions, which have little reference to the inner natures of the lovers. Kālidāsa writes this third play in which his main object is to hold a mirror to the sufferings in human life as rooted in the human psyche. If the lovers have to suffer untold agony, it is because of their own failings, rooted in their character.

The sages have no place in the plot of the *Mālavikāgnimitra*. Their part is but external in the *Vikramorvaśīya*, as there is no occasion for their sentimental involvement. But in the *Śākuntala*, the heroine herself is a fondly brought up daughter in Kaṇva's hermitage. The poet brings up a clear-cut conflict between the ethos of the ascetic hermitage and the deceptive behaviour of the hero-king. The chasm between his ostensible respect for ascetics and his actual repudiation of their statements is very powerfully highlighted as the very climax of the play.

In the first play, the king's conquest in love is not crowned with a heir's birth. The myth of the nymph and the hero is also bound up with the birth of a heroic son in the second play. But in the third, the reunion of the broken family is integrally bound up with and has the primary goal of getting a mighty son as heir, one fit to be the first of a line of great kings.

In other respects the three dramas share a common theme and reveal a common dramatic art. The choice of Śakuntalā as heroine is itself a very happy one. She retains all her naiveté, natural charm and holiness of character as found in the *Mahābhārata*, because she is born and bred up in the sacred wood of a sage, unexposed to the courtly atmosphere of double-talk and double-think.

Fate brings king Dusyanta to this hermitage on a pretext of hunting. Very symbolically, the poet suggests that the king's party was hunting down harmless deer in the *āśrama* without any compunction. He is to be told not to do so. This is a premonition of what is in store for the deer-like girl who is destined to meet him and fall an unsuspecting victim.

The jester's place is the royal court or harem and he is out of sorts in a hermitage. Śakuntalā and her two companions are watering the plants with sisterly affection at the time of the first meeting.

The king whimsically chooses to eavesdrop on them and introduces himself as an officer of the king. Why does he assume such a disguise? Apparently not to embarrass the girls! As evidence of his office he shows the ring with the king's name Duṣyanta, inscribed on it.

Of the three girls, Śakuntalā captures his fancy and he succeeds in the course of his lively coversation to observe her closely in her changing moods. Every fleeting moment brings a new view of her perfect form. Further he ascertains that she is a suitable bride for him by birth as well as by the intention of Kanva. These entertainments for his eye are made possible by the convenient absence of the head of the hermitage.

Unlike the other two plays, the jester here is shunted out to the palace and the interest of the king in the maiden of the forest is kept a secret even from him. His ego is boosted by the prospect of going back on the royal elephant like a crown-prince with all the retinue, so that he might deputise for Duṣyanta in the ritual arranged for the birth of an heir by the Queen mother.

When Duṣyanta is told by the ascetics that he should prolong his stay to give them protection from the menace of demons, it comes as a godsend to Duṣyanta, whose heart is pushing him towards Śakuntalā more and more.

Śakuntalā's first upsurge of love is described by the poet as a departure from the sacred ethos of the hermitage. Though she is growing here, she is the offspring of a nymph and her heredity asserts itself in spite of her environment. She is so much shaken that the friends lose hope of her normal recovery. Burning fever is baking her limbs and all home-remedies fail to revive her drooping spirits. The friends guess from their knowledge of books that she must be a victim of Cupid's arrows, and cleverly worn out her heart's secret, namely love of Duṣyanta. They arbitrarily decide to save their friend by arranging a secret union of the lovers without consulting any elderly person. The king is only too eager to get that chance because he is also deeply in love by that time. Whether it is "a craving for tart tamarind of one who has had a surfeit of a sweet dates" — as the jester put it, is left as an open question because there is no one on his side also to bear witness to the prospective liaison or marriage of the two lovers. Whether it will turn out to be a happy marriage or a misalliance is in the womb of destiny. Kālidāsa encapsulates here the eternal problem of humanity about love-marriage which precariously hangs on the slender thread of mutual trust. That explains in part the play's eternal interest for all generations of readers.

These two acts (II and III) depict the stages of love in the same way, more or less, as we have seen in the other two plays. The conventional poetic conceits of lovers censuring the love-god, the moon, the spring, etc., are all there, though in a very delectable form devised by the poet in his fertile fancy.

The cental act of this seven-act play opens with a surprise flung on us. Sage Durvāsas is hurrying away after pronouncing a terrible curse—that the lover she is doting upon would completely forget her—on an innocent Śakuntalā who has forgotten herself and is lost in her thoughts of her beloved. She has not noticed his arrival and failed in her duty of offering him worshipful hospitality as the hostess-in-charge of the hermitage. Too much of even a good thing is bad and fate chooses this weak moment to strike her unawares.The pity of it is that she doesn't hear even the curse which is heard only by her friends. They try their best to appease the sage and become satisfied that the curse would cease. the moment the king was shown the token of his love, viz., the ring with his signet. The remedy is literally in Śakuntalā's hand and they keep it a secret from her to avoid adding to her grief.

Unlike other plays, the sages in the hermitage play a direct part in the progress of this play and add a new dimension to the emotions portrayed. Love in its various forms—sexual, sensual, conventional, romantic—have all a core of selfish egoism. But it can be broadened at the base to include the selfless affection of not only brotherly and sisterly love, but love of youngsters for elders and *vice versa*, and finally the whole world of living creatures—bird, beast and plant, ending up in love of god. It is in this fourth Act that we get vignettes of these sublime manifestations of love which also form part of the empire of *śānta śṛṅgāra* in its unopposed state of harmony.

Nature becomes a character in this Act. Kaṇva has arrived. From a divine voice he comes to know of

Śakuntalā's love-marriage and her prospective motherhood. He at once decides to send her to her husband, selecting a party from the hermitage to conduct her to the palace.

The plants and animals of the hermitage are all affected by the sorrow of parting from Śakuntalā who was their loving friend.The trees provide her with royal robes and ornaments to make her queenly.

Indian sensibility regards the four verses in this leave-taking scene as the best in the drama:

This though with sadness moves my heart
I check my tears with faltering voice.
My sight is dimmed by anxious care.
If such a hermit's grief, through love
What must a worldly parent feel
When first dissevered from his child!

In virtue of our sacred rank,
In virtue of your honoured race,
In virtue of the love she gave,
Unprompted by her friends, to you,
Receive her with your wedded wives,
And recognise her queenly rank!
Fate may ordain whatelse occurs.
Her kindreds' office ends with this.

Hear me, hear me, you trees of the sacred grove!
Unto her Lord's abode departs
Your gentle friend, who could not touch,
The cooling rill till drunk by you.
Who loved you so she never plucked
Your blooms, though found of ornament,
Whose festive day it ever was
when your flowers opened in the spring.
Then bid her tenderly farewell !

Willingly pay your elders honour;
Love your fellow-queens as a friend;
Though he offend you never show
An angered mind before your lord;
And check your pride in happy days !

Acting so, the bride becomes
A worthy wife; But otherwise
A source of discord to her home.[36]

Carrying the blessings of the elders and bidding farewell to friends, Śakuntalā in deep melancholy arrives in the royal court with her party. She has no room in her mind for any thought since she does not take seriously the parting advice of her bosom friend that should there be any problem, she should show her ring to the king.

Indeed we find a most dramatic use of irony in the construction of the play. The hero and the heroine are both ignorant of the curse; but the spectators know it all the time. Both the motifs of the curse and the ring are innovations of Kālidāsa's genius. They are not found in the epic source.

Śakuntalā has pinned her faith on the pledged word of a king who is renowned in all the three worlds for his uprightness and moral earnestness. She is entertaining high hopes of a royal reception as would be mother of an heir to the great king. All her hopes are shattered to pieces in the formal, but cold, welcome of the king who remains unaffected by her presence. Just before her arrival his mind is steeped in thoughts of his queens in the harem. The messengers of sage Kaṇva have to remind him of his secret marriage with Śakuntalā and request him to receive her in the proper way. But even this does not help to revive his memory.

As a last resort, Śakuntalā's veil is removed from her face. Her beauty he admires even now, but only as a neutral spectator, not as a beloved husband. She offers to convince him by showing the token ring. But lo! there is no ring on her finger! Her guardian lady says that it must have been lost while she worshipped on her way the holy waters of Śacītīrtha. The sarcastic retort of the king that all women are expert liars leads to an altercation. The helpless bride attempts to revive his memory by a detailed account of a very private and intimate talk they had during their honeymoon in the hermitage. Even this cuts no ice.

The king's chaplain intervenes and makes the king agree to have Śakuntalā in his house utill her delivery since her people are going back, ignoring her cries for help.

This scene of rejection is the climax of the play; and the poet here brings in a *deus ex machina* to show a way out of the tangle. When Śakuntalā desperately calls on the earth-goddess to split and take her in, a divine light descends from heaven and disappears with Śakuntalā. If this is a miracle, the spectators must be ready to accept even greater miracles before the happy ending comes. But in a legendary play, it is a natural intervention of the divine.

Śakuntalā is here depicted like Sītā in the epic. In Indian tradition there was a firm faith in the efficacy of a *divya* or test by ordeal. When all other human resources failed to give justice, the accused would be judged innocent if he passed through an ordeal unharmed. The earth opens and takes back Sītā in the epic. Similarly, mother Menakā has withdrawn her daughter Śakuntalā into her own haven. An Indian audience would take it as a ray of hope in this gathering storm of tragedy. But the poet has not forgotten to suggest that the king's heart has been stirred to its depths and is in a fit of introspection, and granting that Śakuntalā's statement may be true after all though he has no memory of it.

There is need for some relief to the spectators from the very serious and tense atmosphere we saw. A consummate artist that he is, Kālidāsa brings in an episode of a fisherman caught in the hands of policemen as a thief of the king's ring when he is trying to sell it in the market. His story that he found the ring in the belly of a fish he netted is not believed by the police. They subject him to all kinds of harassment until at last it is reported to the king who confirms the fisherman's story and rewards him. Now the very police officers who tortured him earlier are equally eager to have a share in his reward.

The light entertainment provided by the scene with its hidden sarcasm of society is very realistic and enjoyable. It also indirectly helps the plot's progress towards *denouement*.

A reunion of the couple through supernatural agencies is ruled out in the nature of things, since what is required is a complete change of heart on the part of both. Kālidāsa has given much space to make this appear convincing in the revived memory of the hero and the life of discipline undergone by the heroine in sage Kaśyapa's hermitage. The hero's remorse finds an outlet in his self-lasceration as well as acts of kindliness unknown to him before. As the jester says, he is again "seized by Śakuntalā fever". All the scenes of his first romance reappear before his mind's eye and he cannot excuse himself for disowning not only a wife but also an heir to the throne. The spurned Śakuntalā's glance haunts his heart and pierces it like a poisoned dart. The king is in no mood to allow any celebration of the spring festival. It looks as if even the trees and plants are sharing in his grief since they are not putting forth their seasonal flowers and leaves.

The king's grief grows so much that he almost loses his balance of mind. Like the Purūravas we saw, he too starts addressing the ring, the bee, the flamingo and so forth. He tries to forget his sorrow like the Yakṣa in the poem by painting a portrait of his beloved against the backdrop of a mountain landscape, with river, hut and grazing deer of the hermitage.

Kuntaka, the great Sanskrit literary critic, regards the sixth act as the best illustration of Kālidāsa's genius because it is exclusively his innovation. Though it is difficult to believe in such a complete change of heart, it is made credible by the introduction of a character like Sānumati (a messenger of Menakā) to bear witness to it and report it duly to Śakuntalā so that her heart also may be softened towards re-union, though so much hardened by the cruel rejection earlier.

Kālidāsa has brought in an episode of a rich merchant dying heirless. The state interest as per law would be served if his property were to be confiscated to the royal treasury. But in the changed attitude of the king, who is able to identify himself with the lot of the merchant, he proclaims that the property may be settled upon any woman who might mother his progeny. Gone is the self-righteous pride of Duṣyanta.

A general proclamation is also issued that the affectionate king would replace the lost member in every family under his rule. His love is now not confined to Śakuntalā; it is outflowing towards one and all.

That provides the moment for fate to help a reconciliation of the parted lovers. Love in its purer form has now been intensified a thousand-fold. A messenger of Indra takes him to the battle-field of gods and demons, where his valour brings victory to Indra's side and he is later highly praised and rewarded. Indra covertly arranges as a favour for the meeting of Duṣyaṇta with Śakuntalā and their son Sarvadamana at the hermitage of Kaśyapa, on his return journey by air. But the dramatic suspense is maintained fully since Duṣyanta doesn't know about it.

We have seen that in this play Kālidāsa's mature art has provided full scope for the depiction of spiritual values as embodied in saints and ascetics. The play begins in a hermitage and progresses in such a way that the sophisticated city-culture clashes with it and suffers a reverse for some time. It has to be restored to its normal supremacy in the divine scheme of things. Hence we find in the last (7th) Act Duṣyanta stepping into another hermitage at Hemakūṭa, a holy spot midway between heaven and earth.

It is the hermitage of the parents of the Universe including gods, demons and humans. It is endowed with all the riches of heaven, for which the ascetics there have no care and they are absorbed in yogic meditation. Duṣyanta is really eager to pay them his respects. Most unexpectedly, a cry for help reaches his ears. An ascetic nurse in charge of a boy is stunned by the boy's persistent mischief in counting the teeth of a lion's cub and she wants some one to rescue him from the danger she fears from the angry lioness.

The king takes the brave and handsome boy in his arms to which he protests. Meanwhile, the nurse is aghast at the safety of the king who is unharmed when he touches the magic amulet of the boy, which had fallen on the ground. It should have become a snake and killed him, were he anybody other than the boy's parent. This makes the king also suspect that this boy might prove to be his own son after all. He speaks to the child endearingly and the child's unwitting replies add to dramatic irony. He announces himself to be the son of Duṣyanta of the Puru race and not of this stranger. Earlier he has hinted that 'Śakuntalā' is the name of his mother by his confusing a word sounding similarly, though meaning otherwise. It shows that the discovery of the identity of the son by the father is in gradual stages.

Similarly, Śakuntalā also is led up by reports of the ascetic-nurse to expect a meeting with her husband, who is now a new person altogether. Both are thus ready for re-union and they receive the blessings of the divine couple.

The much delayed happy ending involves not merely the union of parted lovers, but a triumph of conjugal felicity, completed with the acquisition of a child. No ordinary child! But the would-be First Emperor of the subcontinent to be named after him as 'Bhārata'. Such a family re-union which comes about after a period of intense heart-searching and proper understanding wins the blessings of sages and gods and proves beneficial to human welfare. Kālidāsa fills new life into old legends and enriches them with the flowers of his own fancy. As a poet of the nation, it is no small achievement of his to recapture the atmosphere of the age-old cultural traditions of India and crystallise them into a perfect literary form, at once most popular and ever fresh.

Kālidāsa's philosophy of life is life-affirming and not life-denying. The essence of the joy of life lies in pure, sacred and ever-widening love. When it is blighted, death rules the roost. Nature loses its animation. Plants become sapless. Rivers dry. The earth becomes a waste-land and life becomes a burden. Kālidāsa's philosophy is a happy blend of the best in Vedic wisdom viewing cosmic creation as a sacrifice, its inviolable moral order as a sign of its continuous functioning and man as a simulacrum of the Absolute. Man's life itself is a counterpart of divine will at work so that self-realisation is also God-realisation. Man is released from the thraldom of multiple incarnations and may hope for salvation only through this saving sensibility within. In this Indian perspective, drama itself becomes a form of religious worship to attain it. Hence the prayer:—

> May the purple, self-existent god,
> Śiva, whose living force pervades the world,
> Save me from being born again on earth.

Thus in Kālidāsa we have the very cream of Indian culture served in the most charming and palatable form.

Five

Conclusions

We have traversed a long way from the evergreen pastures of the hermitage to the summits of blissful heaven through the gardens of romance in all their glamour and golden glow; a phantasmagoria come to life by the inspired creativity of Kālidāsa, the masterpoet of India. It comes as a whiff of health-giving fresh air in our age of doubt and distrust. It is the fresh air of the real spirit of what Kathleen Raine calls, "The India of the imagination".

Only a prophetic mystic poet like William Blake could have a vision of the poet's high office in the universe.

"I rest not from my great task, to open the eternal worlds, to open the immortal eyes of man inwards into the worlds of thought, into eternity—the human imagination."[37]

His more famous lines are:

"To see a World in a Grain of Sand
and a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
and Eternity in an hour."

But in India the credo of the ancients took the form—*Nānṛṣiḥ kurute kāvyaṁ*. Only a sage could be a poet. The poet was also a prophet; not a visionary, but a man of vision. It is from some such enlarged perspective that we should approach a classical masterpoet of the past. These days, when we are engulfed on every side by spiritual destitution and a race for material goods, only a return to the ancient wisdom of poets who sang of spiritual values may prove rewarding to enlightened souls so that the drift of civilization towards doom may yet be halted. One imbued with the message of Kālidāsa cannot perpetrate outrages against man or nature with impunity because he will have a firm faith in the victory of good over evil. Such a new orientation in life is one of the benefits of reading Kālidāsa.

Even our rapid survey has shown that Kālidāsa attempted more than one literary form current in his time; and, that he attained perfection and excellence in each one of them. So much so that he soon became a poets' poet and also a despair of imitators. He forged a new style in Sanskrit poetry at once sweet, sensuous and elegant, as opposed to the gaudy style of Gaudī writers who favoured "Words of learned length and thundering sound". His use of simile and metaphor, poetic fancy and hyperbole, even pun and paradox, is very masterly. His fancies are always fresh and carry the stamp of a vivid imaginative vision. Any verse of his will provide an example of one figure of speech or another and will illustrate what a suggestive evocation of an emotion or mood or feeling is in all its bearings. The harmonious melody of his versification reveals a supreme control over artistic techniques. Such a balance between restraint and opulence, conformity to convention and unfettered creativity, beauty and profundity, is very rare in the history of world literature. Indeed, Kālidāsa has a permanent place in the hearts of all like-minded connoisseurs, Indian and Western.

Kālidāsa's universal humanism is indeed striking and has an all-time relevance. Even when legendary characters are chosen, they are humanised to such an extent that we forget their divinity. The characters of Śakuntalā and Pārvatī illustrate this. The main subject of all his works is man and his destiny, man's eternal quest for pleasure and perfection, the tug-of-war between man's effort and freaks of Fate, man's rapture in love and woe in death.

An English poet could only say — "poetry may not save souls; but it makes souls worth saving". But an Indian poet like Kālidāsa has the conviction that poetry in its highest reaches does save souls.

Our best interpreters of Kālidāsa are poets. For example Tagore says:

> This ancient poet of India refuses to recognise Love as its own highest glory; He proclaims that Goodness is the final goal of Love. He teaches us that the Love of man and woman is not beautiful, not lasting, not fruitful, so long as it is self-centred, so long as it does not beget Goodness, so long as it does not defuse itself into society over son and daughter, guests and neighbours.[38]

One of our latest literary critics to write on Kālidāsa was Umashankar Joshi. He observed that Duṣyanta's love was deficient in regard for personal good of the love-partner while Śakuntalā's love lacked a concern for collective good. One may not agree with him fully because the text does not emphasise these aspects. But none can demur at his concluding observation that "the supreme artist Kālidāsa so re-capitulates the achievements of the age that they always remain fresh in the memory of coming generations". This idea finds its best expression in Rilke's lines on Michael Angelo:

> That was the man who always reappears
> When any age, to mark its closing years,
> Strives yet once more to recapitulate.
> There's one who still can heave its total weight
> And hurl it into his abysmal breast.[39]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Cf. J. Gonda, "The Meaning of the word Alaṅkāra", A Volume of Eastern and Indian Studies presented to F.W. Thomas, Bombay, 1939, p. 97 f.

2. Cf. Lienhard, "On the Actual Structure of Kāvya", *Brahma Vidyā,* Vol. 44-45, 1980-81, p. 161 ff.

3. (a) nirgatāsu na vā kasya
kālidāsasya sūktiṣu
prītirmadhurasārdrāsu
mañjarīṣviva jāyate
(Bāṇa, *Harṣacarita*, Preface)

(b) purā kavīnāṁ gaṇanāprasaṅge
kaniṣṭhikādhiṣṭhita-kālidāsā
adyāpi tattulyakaverabhāvāt
anāmikā sārthavatī babhūva

(c) kavayaḥ kālidāsādyāḥ
kavayo vayaṁ apyamī
parvate paramāṇau ca
padārthatvaṁ vyavasthitam

(d) liptā madhudraveṇāsan
yasya nirvivaśā giraḥ
tenedaṁ vartma vaidarbhaṁ
kālidāsena śodhitam
(Daṇḍin, *Avantisundarī*)

(e) mahākaviṁ kālidāsaṁ
vande vāgdevatāgurum
yajjñāne viśvaṁ ābhāti
darpaṇe pratibimbavat
(*Sabhāṣita*)

(f) kalaye kālidāsaṁ taṁ
kavirājiśikhāmaṇim
yatante' dyāpi yanmārgaṁ
anusartuṁ kavīśvarāḥ
(Cakra-Kavi, *Jānakīpariṇaya*,
Kavya, T.S.S., 1913)

(g) padavīṁ kālidāsasya
lalitāṁ mṛdulaiḥ padaiḥ
na śaknuvantyaho ganturṁ
paśyanto'pi kavīśvarāḥ

4. *Nāṭyaśāstra*, I. 116.

5. See Biswanath Bhattacharya: "Aśvaghosa: A Critical Study", Shantiniketan, 1976, pp. 381-382.

6. Cf. *Abhijñāna Śākuntala* I, 4 and see also IV act of *Vikramorvaśīya*.

7. For the latest revised and objective account of the Vedic Vision, see Jeanine Miller, "The Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas", London, 1985.

8. For a lively account of some of these pen-pictures along with original passages, see S. Radhakrishnan, General Introduction to *Abhijñāna Śākuntala*, Sahitya Akademi Edition, New Delhi, 1965.

9. Subtitle: *An Encyclopaedic Survey of Hinduism*, Volume I and II, London, 1968.

10. Shakespeare Encyclopaedia, London, 1902.

1. (a) S.K. Belvalkar, *Abhijñāna-Śākuntala*, Delhi, 1965
    (b) K.A.S. Iyer, *Mālavikāgnimitra*, Delhi, 1979.
    (c) Suryakant, *Kumārasambhava*, Delhi, 1982.
    (d) S.K. De, *Meghadūta*, Delhi, 1982.
    (e) H.D. Velankar, *Vikramorvaśīya*, Delhi, 1982.
    (f) Rewa Prasada Dwivedi, *Ṛtusaṁhāra*, Delhi, 1990.

2. *Kālidāsa Lexicon*, 3rd Ed., Vol. I, Part 1, Brugge, Rijksuniversiteitte-Gent., 1954-58.

3. *Kālidāsa-Granthāvali*, Varanasi, 1986, 2nd Ed.

4. Harichand, Kālidāsa et L'art poetique de L'inde, Paris, 1917.

5. S.P. Narang, *Kālidāsa Bibliography*, New Delhi, 1976; and N.R. Subbanna, *Kālidāsa Citations*, Delhi, 1973.

6. This is Aihole inscription of Pulakeśin II, written by Ravikīrti, *IA*, VIII, 237 and *Epigraphia Carnatica*, VI. 1.

7. Vatsabhaṭṭi's Mandasore Inscription. See Fleet's "Gupta Inscriptions", No. 18.

8. R.C. Majumdar, *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Bombay, 1951.

9. *Paumcariu* by Vimalasūri, Ed. V.M. Shah, Surat, 1936.

10. *Raghuvaṁśa*, I-4.

10a. These similarities were pointed out in detail in the beginning of this century itself by a Polish scholar though unnoticed by many. See Andrzej Gawronski "Studies about the Sanskrit Buddhist Literature", Krakow, 1919.

11. *Buddhacarita*, V. 81a.

12. *Meghadūta*, 2b.

13. *Buddhacarita*, IX, 75c.

14. *Saundarananda*, V, 17cd.

15. *Mālavikāgnimitra*, I, 2d.

16. *Jātakamālā*, 147, 12.

17. R. Morton Smith, 'Ślokas and Vipulās', *Indo-Iranian Journal*, Vol. V, 1961, No. 1, p. 18 ff

18. Op. cit., Agra, 1983, p. 40.

19. George Luzerne Hart, *The Relation between Tamil and Classical Sanskrit Literature*, Wiesbaden, 1976.

20. An example is *Akanānūru*, 170. For other examples see G.L. Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil, Their Milieu and Their Sanskrit Counterparts*, Berkeley, California, 1975, pp. 214-216; see also Rabisankar Banerjee, *Pearls of Prakrit Poetry*, Calcutta, 1986.

21. *Kuruntokai*, 216. Here the lady says: "Not knowing,I am so much to be pitied, the black clouds still roar and rain and send lightning, O friend, aiming at my life".

21a. V.V. Mirashi, "Identification of Kuntaleśvara", *Oriental Journal*, Tirupati, Vol. XXII, 1982, p. 169.

22. Siegfried Lienhard, "Tamil Literature Conventions and Sanskrit Muktaka Poetry", *WZKS*, XX, 1976, pp. 101-110. He shows how several standard *kavisamayas* are of Tamil origin.

23. See *Kalpalatāviveka*, Ahmadabad, 1968, pp. 42 f.

24. Vāmana *kāvyālankara-sūtravṛtti*, under III, ii, 2.

25. Daṇḍin, *Avantisundarīkathā*, Introductory verse, "guṇāḍhyaḥ kaviḥ, subandhurvyākhyatā"

    This whole quotation is an extract from the lost *Bhāmaha-vivaraṇa* of Udbhaṭa (8th century) cited in this anonymous *Kalpalatāviveka* under Bhāmaha, IV, 51. Only a few fragments have been published from Rome: R. Gnoli, "Udbhaṭa's Commentary on the Kāvyālaṅkāra of Bhāmaha in serie Orientale", Roma, 1964.

26. *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vo. XI, MK, 39.

27. "Aryamanjuśrīmūlakalpa" *Trivandrum Sanskrit Series*, Verse No. 940.

28. *Bhāgavata*, XII, 1, 15-17. The same is the account in *Viṣṇu*, *Matsya* and *Vāyu Purāṇas*, which furnish a brief account of this dynasty.

29. H.H. Wilson, *Meghadūta* or *Cloud Messenger* (3rd Edition), Varanasi, 1961, pp. 28-29 and 62.

30. Translation John Brough's, See "Selections from Classical Sanskrit Literature", London, 1951, p. 92 f.

31. Sri Aurobindo, "Kālidāsa", Pondicherry, 1950, p. 49.

32. *Nāṭyaśāstra*, XXXI, 105.

33. Sri Aurobindo, *The Hero and the Nymph*, Pondicherry, Calcutta, 1911.

34. John Brough, "Poems from the Sanskrit", London, 1969, pp. 102-105.

35. W.B. Yeats, "Poems", London, 1984, p. 27.

36. These verse renderings are adapted from A. Hjalman Edgren. See H.W. Wells, "Six Sanskrit Plays", Bombay, 1964.

37. *Jerusalem*, 5.18.21.

38. D.S. Sarma, "A Book of Indian Culture", Calcutta, 1944, p. 7.

39. Umashankar Joshi, "Kālidāsa's Poetic Voice", Trivandrum, 1988, p. 60.

Appendix 1

Kālidāsa and Nature

The traditional attitude to Kālidāsa's poetry is best illustrated in the remark of an anonymous Sanskrit critic found in the anthology, Subhāṣitaratnakośa:

> "After so many years of study, it seems as if I have at last found a sort of entrance into the deep, and bright stream of Kalidasa's Muse".

The attitude of modern scholars is neither so modest nor so reverential. For example, Prof. P.V. Kane finds Kālidāsa to suffer in comparison with Bhavabhūti:

> "In his description of Nature and human feelings, Bhavabhuti is entirely free from conventions. The attitude of other Sanskrit poets (not excluding even Kalidasa) is generally conventional. They concern themselves chiefly with the cooing of the cuckoo, the mango blossom, the exciting influence of moonlight, the Ashoka and Bakula trees etc."

There is a general sense in which the very stuff of poetry is convention. As J.L. Lowes puts it: 'the very essence of poetic truth is accepted illusion. And illusion in turn, grows inevitably out of the limitations of the poet's medium. An illusion to which we consent, with all that implies, is the taproot of the conventions of poetry.' In this sense Bhavabhūti is as much conventional as Kālidāsa. But the intended contrast implies that Kālidāsa's treatment of nature is only hackneyed unlike Bhavabhūti's which is strikingly original.

On the other hand, a fulsome compliment is paid by A.W. Ryder to Kālidāsa's treatment of nature:—

> "Rarely has a man walked our earth who observed the phenomena of living nature as accurately as he, though his accuracy was of course that of the poet, not that of the scientist. Much is lost to us who grow up among other animals and plants: yet we can appreciate his "bee-black hair", his Asoka tree that "sheds his blossoms in a rain of tears", his river wearing a sombre veil of mist.
>
> Although her reeds seem hands that clutch the dress to hide her charms; his picture of the day-blooming water-lily at sunset:
>
> "The water-lily closes, but
> With wounderful reluctancy;
> As if it troubled her to shut
> Her door of welcome to the bee."

Both these views appear to miss the essence of Kālidāsa's poetry. Though differing in judgment, they agree in considering the stray descriptions of natural objects by Kālidāsa as fit material to justify an inference regarding his genius. This tendency is noticed among other opinions too which compare Kālidāsa's treatment of nature with that of English poets like Wordsworth and Keats. Whether we regard Kālidāsa as a dilettante court-poet or as a high-priest of Nature, eitherway, we would miss the central unity running through all the poet's writing. It has been said that 'God is a circle whose centre is everywhere'. The saint goes to the centre, while the poet to the ring where every thing comes round again. Kālidāsa's works are all of a piece and are, in the true Indian tradition, averse to divisions like the natural, human and supernatural.

II

Kālidāsa might have followed poetic conventions (*kavi-samayas*) in matters of detail; but he started anew traditions in very literary form he attempted. Kālidāsa is the only poet in Sanskrit who conceived of nature symbolically though, as the central theme of most of his works, poetic as well as dramatic. Viewed in this light the cloud becomes the hero of his poem *Meghadūta*, a friend, philosopher and guide of Indra in heaven and Yakṣa on earth one who represents kindness personified inasmuch as uniting parted couples in love, whether sentient or otherwise. The range of this metaphor is infinite. It can embrace the poetic aspects of the sun, moon and stars, wind and rain, river and sea, hill and dale, tree and creeper, flower and fruit, birds and animals, fairies and spirits. They pulsate with life and combine in a higher harmony of love which is more spiritual than sensual Kālidāsa's poetic world is bathed in beauty and clothed in the rainbow raiment of romance. At the same time, it suggests how the Truth of Vedanta is seized in terms of beauty by the piercing imagination of a poet-sage.

In the imagination of Kālidāsa, every river is bound with the sea in wedlock; every tree and plant awaits a mate. The mountains and forests are the bosom friends of cloud; the wind and vernal blooms confederates of love. The joy of life is felt as much in anxious anticipation of love as in its fulfilment, may more in suffering and sacrifice for the sake of the beloved than in indulgence. Human nature is so inextricably interlinked with nature. To be blind to this joy is no virtue, and to participate in it no vice. Even God, as Kālidāsa conceives, is a devotee of pure love, ever in union with his spouse, though an enemy of brute passion. Even the supposedly juvenile work of Kālidāsa. 'The Procession of the Seasons', unrolls the pageantry of nature only in terms of imagination aglow with the first experience of love. It reveals the lilies and langours of virtue 'without hint of the raptures' and 'roses of vice'.

III

It looks as though Kālidāsa regarded that deep mystery and meaning of nature could be felt by the human heart only at three ascending levels of consciousness viz., sensual attraction, ideal sentiment and spiritual enlightenment. The first fascination has its raptures and frenzies; it becomes purer only by shedding the dross of sensuality in the fire of separation where love is valued for its own sake and has no ulterior purpose. But the final phase is reached only by spiritual discipline (*tapasya*). All the works of Kālidāsa can be aptly classed on this basis. The poem *Ṛtusaṃhāra* and the drama *Mālavikāgnimitra* represent delineation of nature in human terms at the first level of love. If the poem confines itself to the ecstasy of it, the drama also highlights the complexities and conflicts incidental to it. The characters here are just human at ground level. The poem *Meghadūta* and the drama *Vikramorvaśīya* represent delineation of nature in human terms at the second level of love. If the poem embodies the unalloyed form of love-in-separation, the drama shows also the stages of transition from the first level to the second. The main characters in both are superhuman or semidivine.

The epic *Kumārasaṃbhava* and the play *Abhijñānaśākuntala* represent nature in human terms at the third and highest level of love which is spiritual. The spiritual discipline undergone by both Siva and Parvati before they could wed, the imperfection of the first and the inadequacy of even the second level of love are brought home to us in the story of Kama burnt down but revived in a bodiless state in the epic. All the characters here are divine, the very mountain Himalaya too, symbolic of sublime majesty and might of will.

Kālidāsa's account of the physical traits of the mountain shades off imperceptibly into the divine heights of his personality. To realise the full beauty and grandeur of the epic, one must be soaked in the meaningful myths of ancient India as Kālidāsa himself was. In one flash, the poem reveals the identity of absolute truth, goodness and beauty in the union of Siva and Parvati brought about by sages. True to the dramatic form, Śakuntala presents this very message in the union of Duṣyanta, Śakuntala and Bharata by the efforts of sages like Kaṇva and Mārīca on the spiritual plane. The characters once again are semi-divine and we have enlightened sages at the very centre. Kālidāsa's art reaches its apex here in identifying Śakuntala herself as the fairest flower of the penance-grove and Duṣyanta as a bee that cannot shed his fickleness until he breathes the rarefied spiritual air of heaven. The imagery of Kālidāsa relating to the bee and flower recurs regularly in almost every significant scene of the play, but Kālidāsa concludes with the observation that only the works of the learned who have drunk of the founts of scriptural truth deserve recognition (*sarasvatī śrutimahatam mahīyatām*).

The epic *Raghuvaṃśa*, with its galaxy of heroes and heroines, is equally in line with the scheme outlined above. It begins with a glowing picture of *tapasya* on the part of Dilīpa and his queen, which alone can ensure the rise of great men like Raghu, Aja and Rāma. The loves of Aja and Rāma are the highest expressions of the second level of consciousness mentioned above. The poem concludes with the tragic consequences of the passionate and licentious life of Agnivarṇa, the last of the Raghus. A poet who began with the highest note could only end his poem thus with a tragic note.

Such an analysis is in strict consonance with the basic principles of criticism developed in India by the Dhvani theorists. To take out of context single lines or verses about the cuckoo or Aśoka and to judge them as conventional or otherwise is to lose sight of the unifying *rasa*. As seen above, Kālidāsa is most original and preeminent in his delineation of *śṛṅgāra-rasa*. In its context, has not the bird cakravāka itself in the *Abhijñānaśākuntala* become a symbolic image of the heroine's separation to come? is not the Aśoka tree a living character almost in the play *Mālavikāgnimitra*, testifying to the princely purity of the heroine by blossoming within five nights of her touch and by bringing about the union of the lovers after removing all but insuperable obstacle in the way, viz., the rival's jealousy? We need not multiply instances. From the point of view of *rasa-dhvani*, every detail relating to nature in Kālidāsa can be shown to be full of infinite shades of significance. His roseate bowers and ever blooming flowers are not pointers to just a well-regulated garden-plot; when Kālidāsa saw them, his heart had beaten and he had lived.

One example to show the janus faced art of Kālidāsa in describing nature may be given here. It is from the XIII canto of the *Raghuvaṃśa* where the charming confluence of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna are being described by Rāma to Sītā as they are flying back to Ayodhya:—

Oh faultless Sita mine, of faultless limbs.
See here the holy Ganga's clear wave
With Jumna intermixed of waters blue.
See Ganga's current broken by her rival.
It seems a pearly necklace here that's woven
With emeralds covering it in splendour mixed
And there a lotus chaplet white, set in
With lotuses all blue at intervals;
And there again a row of flamingoes
From Manasa, midst geese of dark grey wings.
Seems here like grounds with whitest sandal smeared
And bearing ornamental leaves, black-sandaled;
And yonder there, all beautiful, equals
The splendour of the moonlight 'neath the shade
By darkness lying there variegated;
And yonder there, it looks like streaks all white
Of clouds autumnal that midst them betray
A little sky to view thro' openings clear;

> And here it looks a part of Siva's form,
> Anointed pure with sacred ash all o'er,
> And adorned too with snakes all black; ah thus
> The merging glory of the waters two.

It won't do if we admire or criticize black and white presented here as separate disconnected pictures. The merging waters have called forth from the poet the images of a pearly necklace, a lotus chaplet, a flight of birds, ornamental leaves, moon-light and shade, the clouds and Lord Siva himself. The sahṛdayas will see the thread of imagination that knits them all, and feel the whole truth in a moment of beauty.

If Kālidāsa had not solved the Great Equation, how could he have connected the birds and the lotuses and Siva? What convention would have helped him to do that? (From *Ṛtain,* Lucknow, July, 1969)

Appendix 2

2. The Imagery in Kālidāsa's Mahākāvyas

'Imagery' is a term which has acquired prominence in the language of English literary critics and theorists in the twenties of the twentieth century. As Craig observes: 'Imagery is a new name for a group of rhetorical figures and devices at least as old as Quintilian; and new imagery is but old rhetoric writ large.' But often it is used so vaguely that it refers to any aspect of language that the critic wants to bring into his discussion.[1]

F.R. Leavis, the famous English critic, points out that images are 'worth examining—they are there to examine—because they are foci of a complex life, and sometimes the context from which they cannot be even provisionally separated, if the examination is to be worth anything.'[2]

But the complexity of verbal organization is a very wide if not vague concept, something similar to Vāmana's idea of *rīti.*

According to I.A. Richards, 'image' has at least three meanings:—

1. 'a copy of a sensation', e.g. 'It is bitter cold'
2. 'an idea in the mind which represents something' e.g., 'The readiness is all'

3. 'a figure of speech, a double unit involving a comparison like Metaphor; eg. 'This fell sergeant Death/Is strict in his arrest.'[3]

In short, imagery can be sensuous, metaphorical or symbolic. Poetic images course on, drawn as it were by 'books' association' as J.L. Lowers put it [4] and are forged by a mind in an intense moment of insight. Middleton Murry understands metaphor to arise out of the poet's strong and constant impulse to create life, or to transfer life from his own spirit to things apparently lifeless.[5] Coleridge himself talks of 'predominant passion' that modifies the images and is in turn modified by them.

All these ideas are familiar to us in Indian poetics. When our critics say that the poet's *rasa* enlivens with life even lifeless objects like stone in the empirical world (*jagadgrāvaprakhyaṁ nijarasabharāt sārayati ca* — Abhinavagupta); or talk of *dhvani* as a linguistic usage unique to poetry; or talk of *rūpaka* as the first of a series of *alaṅkāras* (See Bhāmaha, *rūpakadiṁ alaṅkāraṁ......*), or when *viśiṣṭā-padaracanā* or complex organisation of *śabda* and *artha* is talked of as *rīti*, we are really traversing the ground of imagery all the time.

II

Now let us see how Kālidāsa fares when examined from the standpoint of imagery by taking a few examples from his two *mahākāvyas*.

First of all, Kālidāsa starts his *Kumārasaṁbhava* by personifying Himavān as a god and king in mountainform (*devatātman*). Though stationary, he has to discharge godly functions or distribute godly favours. It might look impossible for us, but not to Kālidāsa. That he was the calf used in milking all gems and precious herbs from mother-cow is an image drawn from myths. He causes twilight anytime he likes by his mineral resources and helps in the make-up of nymphs (I.4). He helps in the singing of *kinnaras* by making his bamboos serve as so many flutes (I.8). His iridiscent herbs serve as night-lamps to mating celestial couples (I.10). He protects darkness from the fear of sunlight by sheltering it in his caves. (I.12). The yaks turn their tails to wave him with chowries as it were (I.13). The wind provided by him will relieve the fatigue of hunters (I.15). He was crowned by the Creator as King of Mountains in view of his services to religious sacrifices. (I.17). We have quoted only a few specimens here from the long description. Because of this sustained imagery, we do not feel perplexed when we are next told that he married Menā and became a father of a son, Maināka and a daughter, Pārvatī.

Pārvatī's birth adds sanctity as well as beauty to this father Himavān. Is it not odd? — a daughter bringing glory to her father even at birth? No, it is very natural as Kālidāsa sees it:

> प्रभामहत्या शिखयेव दीपः
> त्रिमार्गयेव त्रिदिवस्य मार्गः ।
> संस्कारवत्येव गिरा मनीषी ।
> तया स पूतश्च विभूषितश्च ।।[6]

There are three associate images here drawn from life and nature. A torch (*dīpa*) winning one's esteem by its bright flames; the heavenly region becoming holy as well as lovely by the birth of the river Gaṅgā and last but not least, the speech of a poet, full of grace and beauty, adding up to the glory of the man ! In Sanskrit all the three words — *dīpa, mārga* and *manīṣin* are in the masculine, while the other three words *prabhā, trimārgā* and *gīḥ* are all in the feminine, making the relation of father and daughter possible. Only a Kālidāsa can think of such associated imagery illumining the whole theme through reflected images in several set mirrors simultaneously.

How about the extraordinary beauty of Pārvatī ? It would be a cliche if he compared her face to a lotus or the moon. But he avoids the cliche in his own inimitable way by creating a new image about them. 'Beauty of the moon is void of the beauty of the lotus, and the beauty of the lotus lacks the beauty of the moon. Hence to overcome this deficiency, the goddess of beauty stations herself in Pārvatī's face and delights in achieving a combination of both the mutually exclusive aspects of beauty:—

चन्द्रं गता पद्मगुणान्न भुङ्क्ते
पद्माश्रिता चान्द्रमसीमभिख्याम्।
उमामुखं तु प्रतिपद्य लोला
द्विसंश्रयां प्रीतिमवाप लक्ष्मीः।।[7]

And all that beauty incarnate, viz. Pārvatī is offered at the feet of Śiva sitting in penance, with the mission of serving him. Indeed it is symbolic of Kālidāsa's philosophy that the fulfilment of beauty lies in serving the holy:

प्रियेषु सौभाग्यफला हि चारुता

At a wider or higher spiritual level, the whole story of the *Kumārasaṁbhava* wherein Kāma or Eros is first destroyed and Śiva triumphs in his Yoga only after his marriage with Pārvatī might appear paradoxical at first sight. In order to resolve this apparent paradox, we might say, Kālidāsa has used the mythical symbolism in his own way in the poem. The contrast between lust or earthly love and holy, spiritual or divine love could not have been brought home to us in any other way than in the handling of the myth by Kālidāsa. As Goethe and Rabīndranāth Tagore have noted unerringly, the unique genius of Kālidāsa is revealed most in his treatment of the earthly elements as getting purified by suffering and austerity to reach the heights of the divine. In the *Kumārasaṁbhava*, the dizzy heights of even the supra-divine are suggested; and the *saṁbhogaśṛṅgāra* of the VIII canto has remained a controversial issue in the estimation of Indian critics all along. Taken literally, it must be admitted as a glaring flaw of *anaucitya* or impropriety. But taken symbolically, or spiritually, it is not only not a flaw but a positive excellence. How else can one illustrate the greatness of Śiva, the omnipotent and the omniscient ? If he behaves in a human way, it is only his *līlā* or sport; and who can question or sit in judgement over his supreme freedom; as Aruṇagirinātha rightly questions us ? All seeming contradictions in Śiva reveal only his unfathomable perfection.

III

After this brief survey of the *Kumārasaṁbhava* whose theme is *divya* or supernatural, let us now turn to Kālidāsa's other poem *Raghuvaṁśa* which is *mānusa* in its theme.

The first king eulogised is of course Dilīpa. Like all kings, he too collects taxes from his subjects. But his object is not just to fill his coffers; it is to give them back the wealth in an increased measure. Here Kālidāsa gives us the apt image of the sun who sucks up the waters on earth only to shed the same on parched earth once again in the form of torrential rain, whose volume is thousand times more than the volume lost in evaporation:—

> प्रजानामेव भूत्यर्थं स ताभ्यो बलिमग्रहीत् ।
> सहस्त्रगुणमुत्स्त्रष्टुमादत्ते हि रसं रविः ।।

The appropriateness of the analogous image will be increased all the more, when we remember that the first originator of this race of kings, prior even to Ikṣvāku and Manu, is the Sun himself. If we further remember the associate image of Yajñacakra in the Gītā *parjanyādannasaṁbhavaḥ* (III.14) or smṛti passage *ādityājjāyate vṛṣṭiḥ vṛṣṭerannaṁ tataḥ prajāḥ*, at once the resonant overtones of a cosmic dimension will fill our fancy. such is the multi-dimensional range of *anusvānopama-vyaṅgya-dhvani* or poetic image, even of *vastu* or referent.

But the field of *rasādidhvani* is both wider and more fascinating than that of such *vastu-dhvani*. Here the images get modified by a predominant passion and acquire shades of scintillating radiance. The one ruling sentiment in all the different cantos describing the galaxy of heroes in this poem is the *vīra* or the heroic. Kālidāsa has attempted as many variations of this dominant sentiment as are outstanding. If Dilīpa is an embodiment of *dayā-vīra* or heroism in compassion, Raghu is as much a *yuddha-vīra* or hero in war as a *dāna-vīra* or hero in generous gift. Aja is a romantic hero who lives and dies for the sake of love. Daśaratha is almost tragic in his career, his petty weaknesses swelling into undue proportions and bringing about his death. And Rāma is a rare combination of many-faceted heroism, undaunted by the worst trials of Fate such as the one he faced when he had to choose between two evils—whether to desert the throne or his innocent queen. Kuśa is at once given to sport and so heroic that he can win the hand of a *nāga* princess by his very talk of force. Every description in the poem serves is an objective correlative, to use the phrase of T.S. Eliot, of this predominant sentiment each in its own way. Even when the scene shifts to one of sorrow as in the lament of the bereaved Aja, or the wail of the banished Sītā, or the drunken excesses of Agnivarṇa, it does not undermine the essential emphasis of *vīra* throughout the poem. With this in mind, we might cite here one or two instances of Kālidāsa's unique use of imagery:—

Dilīpa is स्वहस्तार्जितवीरशब्दः (II 64); Raghu in his fight with Devendra himself can bear even a blow of the Thunderbolt on his chest, a blow which no mountain could bear—अस ङ्गमद्रिष्वपि सारवत्तया न मे त्वदन्येन विसोढमायुधम्। is an open admission on the part of the defeated god (III. 63a). No wonder his dazzling radiance filled the earth and heaven as if it were the sunlight itself undimmed by clouds:

निर्वृष्टलघुभिर्मेघैर्मुक्तवर्त्मा सदुःसहः।
प्रतापस्तस्य भानोश्च युगपद् व्यानशे दिशः।।[8]

A sensitive reader cannot forget the recurring image of the sun as well as rain more than once in the poem. We need quote Kālidāsa's maxim here with which this lovely canto closes :

स विश्वजितमाजह्रे यज्ञं सर्वस्वदक्षिणम्।
आदानं हि विसर्गाय सतां वारिमुचामिव।।[9]

'Great persons receive anything only to return it in an increased form even like clouds that suck water only to shed it as rain.' The hooked images of sun and rain, the symbols of life on earth, are indeed repeated almost in every other verse and they are unified into the symbol of *yajña* or sacrifice (See —तमध्वरे विश्वजिति क्षितीशं निःशेष विश्राणितकोशजातम्—V.I). The sacrifice performed by Raghu is reminiscent of the cosmic sacrifice already alluded to and its natural end is again rain, not of mere water but of gold. सुवर्णवृष्टि is also a very significant image. हिरण्मयीं कोषगृहस्य मध्ये वृष्टिं शशंसुः पतितां नभस्तः— V.29 God has distributed royal responsibility only between two namely, the sun in the sky and the king on earth:—

रात्रिर्गता मतिमतां वर मु शय्यां
धात्रा द्विधैव ननु धूर्जगतो विभक्ता।
तामेकतस्तव बिभर्ति गुरुर्विनिद्र-
स्तस्या भवानपरधुर्यपदावलम्बी।।[10]

Sleep is night which must end at the appointed time viz. sunrise. Sunlight and royal duty are almost identical in this fused image of Kālidāsa. There is a story current among traditional *pandits* that this verse was written by Sarasvatī herself when Kālidāsa was tired and went to sleep. It is only when *sahṛdayas* open out their hearts to the hidden layers or vistas of meaning here and elsewhere, that they will understand and appreciate the compliment. One can see that I have throughout talked only of the imagery of Vikrama and āditya in the *Raghuvaṁśa.* Is it too much if I conclude that this is a poetic and uniquely Kālidāsian way of eulogising the Vikramāditya idea of legendary fame.

(From the *Journal of Sanskrit Akademy*, Vol. II,
Hyderabad, 1980)

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See Craig: 'Recent Scholarship of the English Renaissance,' *Studies in Language and Literature,* ed., G.R. Coffman, Chapel Hill, North Capolina, 1945, p. 148.
2. Leavis, 'Imagery and Movement,' *Scrutiny,* XII Sept. 1945, p. 119.
3. See Richards, Coleridge on Imagination, New York, 1935; pp. 32-33.
4. The Road to Xanadu, Constable, London, 1930.
5. *'Essay on Metaphor',* Countries of the Mind, II Series, 1931.
6. Kumārasambhava, 1. 28
7. Ibid, I. 43.
8. Raghuvaṁśa, IV. 15.
9. Ibid IV. 86.
10. Ibid. V. 66

Appendix 3

Kālidāsa and the Problems of Evil

> Admirable as is Kālidāsa's work, it would be unjust to ignore the fact that in his dramas and in his epics he shows no interest in the great problems of life and destiny.....Assured, as he was, that all was governed by a just fate which man makes for himself by his own deeds, he was incapable of viewing the world as a tragic scene, of feeling any sympathy for the hard lot of the majority of men, or appreciating the reign of injustice in the world. It was impossible for him to go beyond his narrow range.

Such is the considered verdict of Keith,[1] an accepted authority on Sanskrit literature. A recent attempt at revaluation undertaken by H.W. Wells in his book. *The Classical Drama of India* (Bombay, 1963) puts the accent on what he calls "equilibrium" as the essence of Sanskrit plays, a factor "Habitually overlooked in Western criticism and in the East presumably at first taken for granted and later allowed to rest largely unnoted." From this new standpoint it emerges that

> the Indian playwright desires neither the more harrowing depths of tragedy nor the irresponsible hilarity of pure comedy. His ideal implies a phase of the serenity to which the deeper spirit of Asia has from its most venerable traditions been dedicated.
>
> (p. 53)

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[1] *The Sanskrit Drama p.160*

> Also,
>
> .....While the Western drama delights in surprises and looks outward, Sanskrit drama takes the oppo site course. Its content is psychological and spiritual rather than social, ethical and intellectual; it aims to establish the felicity of equilibrium in the soul of each spectator. (p. 32)
>
> Equilibrium, as the Indian drama reveals it, is exemplified both in the conception of the plots, and what is more important, in the execution of detail. (p. 50)

Lest some one should belittle the originality of the discovery by equating it with the Indian theory of *rasa*, Mr. Wells adds:

> In each play there is observable not only a pervasive sentiment or *rasa*, concerning which the critics have much to say, but a persistent and readily observable equilibrium with which the same critics seem to have been much less consciously concerned. (p. 54)

Did Kālidāsa ignore the problem of evil as urged by Keith or did he, representing the contemplative East achieve "equilibrium between opposites" as averred by Wells? An answer to this question is attempted here in the light of the Indian theory of *rasa*.

At the outset we must confess our inability to grasp the full significance of the master-key of "equilibrium" which would unlock all the secret vaults of Sanskrit drama, though we are quite on firm ground in dealing with the assessment of Keith. The acute and alert mind of Wells invests the formula of equilibrium with a significance applicable alike to plot and character; style and structure, meaning and message. We are concerned here only with the last aspect and that too with particular reference to Kālidāsa.

According to the Western way of thinking, life is a riddle and death a mystery. A playwright whose task is to mirror life may either go deep enough and present the tragic quality of the human situation or may stop at the surface in amusement at the petty life-interests of common men. A dramatist's greatness is to be measured only in one of these ways, and it has been well said that "the world is a comedy to those who think, and a tragedy to those who feel." Tragedy is deeply concerned with the problem of evil and man's struggle with destiny; it asserts man's strength in heroic suffering itself. Comedy puts the accent on zest for life with all its oddities and attractions. Judged from this standpoint, Kālidāsa's plays would naturally appear deficient, since his range is restricted to romance. Yet Keith hardly does justice to Kālidāsa when he concludes that Kālidāsa leaves the problem of evil untouched because he was assured that all is governed by a just fate.

The Indian doctrine of *karma* has been much misunderstood, and its importation into literary criticism is a misapplication. *Karma* is the solution proposed by Hinduism to absolve God of the charges of cruelty and partiality in explaining the inequalities found in His creation. Never has it been utilized by our classical poets and playwrights to explain away the problem of evil. All our epic heroes are intensely aware of the existence of evil, within and without, and rise manfully to fight it. They all have their share of acute suffering; they struggle in their own way against inexorable fate, instead of succumbing to it passively as "just". Kālidāsa, truly representing the Indian epic tradition, has not forgotten to emphasize that his heroines Urvaśī and Śakuntalā suffered because of perverse fate (*pratikūladaiva*) in spite of their innocence. But it will be asked: "Did they not passively submit to it instead of actively resisting it?" The answer lies in a direction but dimly noticed by literary critics; and that is Kālidāsa's idea of the curse (*śāpa*) which bridges two worlds as envisaged by the Indian playwright, viz., the material and the spiritual, and which makes room for tragic irony.

While Western plays move in one world of reality, Kālidāsa's heroes and heroines (except in the light *Mālavikāgnimitra*) are simultaneously denizens of two worlds. While Western tragedies end in awe and pity with only a counsel of despair, the serious drama in Sanskrit rises higher, and ends in a hope for humanity, though in a dreamland. True, fate cannot be countered in this life by man; but fate too might relent hereafter if man enlists the sympathy of spiritual sages and gods. This hope follows as a corollary from the Indian faith in births, past and future. Kālidāsa's *Śākuntala* is a real tragedy on the earthly level; the happy ending arrives only in a spot near-heavenly. The drama has nothing to say about the final happiness of the lovers on earth. In the same way, the tragic madness of Purūravas after desertion by the celestial nymph is the hard reality on earth; their final reunion being no more than a happy accident occasioned by divine interference. Kālidāsa inherited a literary tradition inextricably bound up with the mythological tradition; hence his attempt to write epics and major dramas on two planes of existence. The menace of death is mitigated but not underrated on the earthly plane. Shorn of mythology, the heroes and heroines of Kālidāsa reveal something akin to the tragic view of life, fully alive to unmerited suffering on earth due to adverse fate. The Indian theory of *rasa* states unmistakably that the happy endings must be brought about only by supernatural agencies adroitly devised by the poet (cf. the dictum: *kuryānnirvahaṇe'dbhutaṁ*), indicating that it was no more than a sop to sentimental spectators. Undue emphasis on this literary device appears to have led to the misjudgement of Kālidāsa by Keith.

Let us turn to the motif of the curse. It is something overshadowing almost every one of the heroes and heroines of Kālidāsa, in his plays as well as in his poems. Dilīpa and Daśaratha, Urvaśī and Indumatī, Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta—all come under the inexorable effects of a curse. A curse is only a concretization of *karma* become immediately productive; and, more often than not, the *karma* is a dereliction in man's duty to spiritual personages or an unconscious misdeed. It partly explains the suffering of man as due to his conscious or unconscious offences against the moral order, and is in a way another palliative offered to the sentimental playgoers that they might be able to witness the acute suffering of heroic characters without too much anguish. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that the curse cannot wholly explain suffering. It operates usually over a specific period of time, thus keeping the door open for hope from the heavenly quarter. Without hope, there would be nothing but despair in the human situation. But neither the sop nor the palliative can blind us to the essentially tragic vision of Kālidāsa which runs through all his works without let or hindrance. Kālidāsa does not ignore Evil or Death; he only attempts to take away their sting in a way different from the Western way.

This leads us to the second explanation, proposed by Wells, that Kālidāsa is achieving Asian 'poise' or 'equilibrium' in his major plays through stories of separation ending happily. Our remarks about Keith's opinion apply with equal force to this seemingly acute observation also. This view also exaggerates the importance of the happy ending; but what is more, it underestimates on the one hand Kālidāsa's detailed treatment of love before marriage, and gives on the other hand the same importance to separation as to reunion, so as to make the principle of 'equilibrium' neatly applicable. It appears to us that the core of the play is in suffering; and it cannot be bracketed with the happy close which is no more than a *coup de théâtre*. Kālidāsa's philosophy of life cannot be judged according to formulae. We are reminded in this connection of the answer of Confucius to a man who ventured to ask him about death: "While you do not know life, how can you know about death?"

What is the meaning of life according to Kālidāsa? The question appears to have been ignored both by Keith and Wells. Kālidāsa has not left us in the dark about this. His exclusive attention to the treatment of love in all its aspects is a sure indicator of his stand. According to him, to live best is to love best. What starts as physical attraction grows into a union of minds and hearts, and ripens into spiritual union only after a period of hard trial during separation. Earthly love ends in marriage as in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*; but heavenly love has to brave severer tests as in Kālidāsa's other plays, and its highest point is represented in the union of Śiva and Pārvatī over the ashes of Kāma for the divine purpose of creation. The Indian householder's life, with its joys and sorrows, is glorified by Kālidāsa; and he deliberately keeps himself aloof from the tumultuous passions that surge outside that sphere. It must be admitted, therefore, that Kālidāsa's attitude to death and suffering is also restricted to this narrow range; but it does not detract from the universality which is Kālidāsa's unique achievement in his limited range. Nor does it follow as Keith says that "he was incapable of feeling any sympathy for the hard lot of the majority of men," as we shall see in the concluding section.

One last point remains to be touched. And that is about the complaint of Wells quoted at the beginning of this essay against the Indian theorists of *rasa*. He talks of "a pervasive sentiment or *rasa* concerning which the critics have much to say." In fact no Indian theorist has ever said that *rasa* is only "a pervasive sentiment". They have always held that a drama is a unity amidst the diversity of eight or nine *rasas* and that the one underlying *rasa* throughout is the principal one (*aṅgi-rasa*)while the others contribute to its total effect as ancillaries (*aṅgi-rasas*). Whenever they talk of the principal *rasa*, they always imply the existence of divers *rasas* by its side.[2] Does this not cover 'the equilibrium between opposites' also?

Rightly understood and applied, the theory of *rasa* can surely lead to a proper appreciation of Sanskrit drama. We have to content ourselves here with only a random example from the *Śākuntala*. The theory of *rasa* governs at once the nature of the characters and the structure of the play. The 'rules' demand that the plot have five 'stages' (*artha-prakṛtis*), of which the last, as already noticed, involves a *deus ex machina*. The first is but preparatory, while the second introduces new threads and complicates the main story. The third, called *patākā* (the 'Flag') provides for a new episode in the story and the fourth envisages minor incidents (*prakarī*); and both these are distantly, but deftly, connected with the main theme. It is in these that the playwright has an opportunity of going out of his main story for a while and admitting "the hard lot of the majority of men," with their *rasas* serving as foils even to the main *rasa*. When Kālidāsa takes his heroine to heaven and dwells at length on the spiritual atmosphere there we have the *patākā* breathing tranquillity and pathos, which are perhaps opposed to Love, the dominant sentiment in the play. But when we are on earth with a fisherman caught by the police, we have an occasion to see Kālidāsa's observation of common humanity. These have only an incidental value, no doubt, from the point of view of the total tone; but they contribute no less to the unfolding of the total meaning of the drama.

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[2] *ekaḥ āryo rasaḥ sthāyī rasānaṁ nāṭake sadā*
rasāstadanuyogitvādanye tu vyabhicāriṇaḥ
-sangītaratnākara, VII. 1682

Kālidāsa, having imbibed the Vedāntic wisdom of India, was always conscious of the *summum bonum* (*mokṣa*) as the highest value. Yet as a true poet, he depicted it only with reference to the Supreme God—Śiva; and none of his other characters are motivated in their youthful lives by this quest after perfection. All of them are busy in the pursuit of values well within the reach of our common humanity. Each one of them is imperfect, coming to grips with unavoidable fate and suffering in his own way. Kālidāsa is not oblivious of suffering; but he does not lose hope for the future, all the same. His message to man torn between joy and suffering is a lesson drawn from Nature:

> On one side the Moon sets behind the Western mount, and on the other side the Sun comes to view in all his red glory. By the simultaneous down-fall and rise of the two luminaries, the people are counselled, as it were, in their vicissitudes of fortune.

It is for us to pause and consider whether Kālidāsa's message is narrower or broader than that of the Western poets.

(From *The Aryan Path*, Bombay, January 1964)

Appendix 4

Social Values and Social Attitudes Delineated in Kālidāsa's Dramas

Religions and ethical values have so much constituted the fabric of Indian culture at all times that no poet was supposed to question them. There was even a time when all literature served as the handmaid of religion; when the ban *kāvyālāpāṁśca varjayet*—was universal. But it is to the singular credit of Kālidāsa that though he wrote only loveplays, he presented such rosy pictures of the ethical ideals in the background, that the old ban came to be restricted in its application to only a narrow class of erotica. (This is clearly stated at the outset by the commentator on the play *Prabodhacandrodaya* of Krisṇamiśra).

As clearly mentioned in the *Kāvyaprakāśa*, literature becomes valuable not only for reason of its aesthetic delight (*rasa*) but also because it serves as the most effective means to teach indirectly the reader in the manner of a sweetheart (*kāntāsammitatayā upadeśa*).

Of all literary forms the play is admittedly the best (*nāṭakāntaṁ kavitvam, sandarbheṣu daśarūpakam śreyaḥ*). This is so because the spectacle of the drama wields a direct influence on the hearts of readers, and directs their emotional response.

At first sight it might appear that only kings and queens, mythical sages and legendary gods, people the plays of Kālidāsa and there is no room for realism in such an atmoshpere. As a matter of fact, Dr. Walter Ruben has concluded in his study of Kālidāsa that he is a bourgeois playwright who ignores the social values of his time. But this charge from the communist angle is as shallow as it is mistaken. It ignores that the characters in Indian dramas, even when they are over-life-size and supernatural, are only imaginative types of noble human beings. That is why Śiva and Pārvatī, Purūravas and Urvaśī, Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā, for all their supernatural endowment, behave as humans on this earth of ours. Their passions as well as pre-occupations are representative of common humanity. And this is the right perspective for understanding Kālidāsa's plays.

Kālidāsa's characters do accept the best in the age-old *varṇāśrama-dharma* of India. Its speciality lies in the fact that it provides equal scope for the attainment of the values of *artha* and *kāma* in conformity with *dharma* on the one hand and without losing sight of the highest value (*paramapuruṣārtha*) of *mokṣa* or the *summum bonum* on the other. One is *pravṛtti-mārga* or progress horizontally towards wealth and welfare in the world; the other is vertical ascent towards spiritual bliss. While every one is free and equal to pursue the former, only the chosen few who are fitted by heredity and environment can reap success in the latter. In the nature of things, progress in the attainment of material values is beset with countless obstacles.

There is nothing like contentment with ones lot and pursuit of one's own duty (*svadharma*) with perseverance which can ensure success. Whether it is a fisherman or a policeman, out in the market place, whether a chamberlain or chambermaid working in the palace, or whether a student like Śāraṅgarava or Mālavikā, or whether a teacher like Ganadāsa or Haradatta, whether a youngman like Vasumitra or Āyus or an oldman like Kaṇva or Mārīca—each of them is an embodiment of *svadharma*. While the minor low characters have also their flaws, like the corrupt policeman and the selfrighteous fisherman, flaws which become a ready butt of the jester, they too reveal a sunny side of innocent good humour which makes life worth living. They are good in their own way and they can make peace over a peg of wine. This reveals how Kālidāsa pictured a society with well-defined aims in life and with a measure of contentment and joy in living, high or low, unknown elsewhere.

Respect for learning and elders is profusely illustrated in all the plays of Kālidāsa. Duṣyanta, though on a hunting spree, loses no time in preparing himself to greet the sage in the nearby *āśrama*, the moment he comes to know that he resides there. Even Indra and other gods show reverence to sage Bharata who is appointed as their drama-director. The mother's message to return for partaking in a *vrata* is regarded by Duṣyanta as an inviolable command. It is the disrespect towards the sages and gods that lands Śakuntalā and Urvaśī in distress.

The dictum *atithi-devo bhava* is well illustrated in the story of Śakuntalā. Even her unwitting lapse, when lost in love, entails a very heavy penalty. She gets the most unwanted curse of rejection by her husband. Again it is the blessing of another sage which lifts the curse and brings her reunion. This belief in the power of sages to bless as well as curse is at the very root of the plot of the *Śākuntala*.

In Kālidāsa's time the *aśramas* were the centres of higher learning and wisdom. Kālidāsa is not tired of describing the plain living and high thinking of the inmates in the *āśrama*. The subjects taught included material as well as spiritual lores. If the boy Bharata can play dauntlessly with a lion's cub, if Āyus can shoot a bird flying high in the air with his first arrow, if Duṣyanta and Purūravas could overcome redoubtable demons effortlessly, it was all the result of the training in the *aśrama gurukulas* or forest universities. It was such a mighty institution indeed that lies in the background of all the plays, almost as a character.

More than the legendary plays, we might naturally expect that social values and attitudes are revealed quite openly in the socio-historical play *Mālavikāgnimitra*. We will not be disappointed in our expectation. There we find an actual bout between two professors vying with each other in establishing their academic prestige not only in theory but also in practicals. Nothing hurts them more than even a veiled hint of their incompetence. The motto of the teacher's high calling is expressed in these memorable words:—

yasyāgamaḥ kevala-jīvikāyai
taṁ jñāna-paṇyaṁ vaṇijaṁ vadanti

That a teacher is really tested by the efficient performance of the student is sound even by modern standards. Better than these unimaginative professors, we have the instance of the Buddhist nun Pandit Kauśikī who is at once learned and ready witted, specialised and resourceful. Kālidāsa seems to suggest that educated women can be more competent and helpful to society than even educated men. If anything, Kālidāsa always reveals a partiality in favour of women as against men (*strīnāmaśikṣita-paṭutvam*). The women characters show thus a variety of interest as well as emotion, adding spice to the lives of their associates.

With all his interest in the varieties of women that add zest to life, Kālidāsa's heart has a warm sympathy for the role of woman as housewife. A housewife according to him is the best type of womanhood that the poet can conceive of. His summing up of her is contained in the following stanza which is ranked by universal consent as one of the best gems in Kālidāsa :—

> Revere the elders, treat even co-wives as dear friends. Don't hit back even if crossed by an irrate husband. Be all kindness to attendants. Don't get puffed up when fortune smiles. Such conduct alone will raise a woman to the status of a housewife. Any breach of this code will make them so many headaches to their home.

We find in the plays of Kālidāsa the gay life of the city-dwellers contrasted from the unsophisticated lives of the villagers. If the *nāgarakas* or men-about-town had their fine arts like music, dance, painting, poety, etc. The unsophisticated village life had its own simple joys and innocence. The artificial life at court appears so repulsive to an Āśramite who first sees it that he wants to run away from it as from burning fire (*janākīrṇaṁ manye hutavahaparītaṁ gṛhamiva*). The contrast is so glaring that Kālidāsa offers us these images to indicate the sharp contrast. A bathed person and one dripping with oil, a clean one and a filthy one, a wakeful man and sleeper, a free bird and a prisoner.

That is the sharp contrast accepted by Kālidāsa also. He is never carried away by the lures of the artificial court life. His real love of nature and life of nature come to the fore in such sensitive statements.

Kālidāsa respects all that is good in our cultural tradition: like the crowned queen of Agnimitra he is a respector of *ācāra* or traditional customs.

Kālidāsa was a firm believer in the desirability of love-marriage. He would prefer even the tragic death of a couple in mutual love without marriage to even an accomplished marriage of a couple without love. His philosophy is—

anāturotkaṇṭhitayoḥ prasiddhyatā
samāgamenāpi ratirna māṁ prati /
paraspara-prāpti-nirāśayorvaraṁ
śarīranāśo'pi samānurāgayoḥ //

And to achieve that end, all means are fair.

Kālidāsa is never tired of observing that sorrow is the law of life (*maranaṁ prakṛtiḥ śarīrinām*). One has to persevere and take the rough with the smooth.

The political precepts envisaged by Kālidāsa also reflect his respect for the authority of Kauṭilya, Manu and such other authorities. His heroes are ideal kings who dedicate themselves to the service of the people at large. None of them forget this principal duty they owe to their subjects. They will put off their personal issues when it is a question of delivering the people from their distress.

Kālidāsa's ethical ideals and philosophy of life find their crystallised expression in so many maxims and home truths (*subhāṣitas*). Some of them may be recapitulated here. They have become part of cultural equipment of all Indians over the centuries.

1. *satāṁ hi sandeha-padeṣu vastuṣu*
pramāṇamantaḥkaraṇa-pravṛttayaḥ

"When beset with doubt, a nobleman need regard the prompting of his conscience alone as the highest authority."

2. *purāṇamityeva na sādhu sarvam*
na cāpi kāvyaṁ navamityavadyam /
santaḥ parīkṣyānyatarad bhajante
mūḍhaḥ parapratyaya-neya-buddhiḥ //

"All that is old is not gold, nor is poetry bad because it is new, good or bad is decided by right men, only by first hand scrutiny. It is a fool indeed who is nose-led by others' judgement.

3. Here is a legal issue used in a highly poetic manner by Kālidāsa in his *Vikramorvaśīya:*— A thief caught with a part of stolen property is liable to make good the whole of it. (*vibhāvitaikadeśena deyaṁ yadabhiyujyate*).

The swan had been apprehended with the gait of Urvaśī, hence it is called upon to restore to him Urvaśī herself as per the above legal dictum.

4. Kingship is not a bed of roses, it has its own worries too. Kālidāsa's way of putting it is striking.

The kingdom is an umbrella borne by one's own hand. The uneasiness it wards off may be sometimes less than the uneasiness it creates. These are only instances at random. A reading of Kālidāsa's plays will be rewarding today as much to a reader interested in the fundamental social attitudes which have come down upto our own times as to a literary critic. Kālidāsa's words are not merely poetic but also embody a social philosophy adumbrated in the *smṛtis* and practised by the people at large. Of course, it is more conservative than revolutionary. But this conservativeness is a virtue in as much as they highlight the unchanging values of universal man transcending time and space.

Appendix 5

Position and Status of Women in Kālidās'as Works

Kālidāsa is a classical poet *par excellence* and he represents the high-water mark of India's classical poetic tradition, according to which the poet is concerned more with a vision of ideal characters and less with a realistic delineation of life as actually lived. The poet playwright writing in this tradition chooses his characters from Purāṇic myths and legends, and endeavours imaginatively to build a bridge between earth and heaven. Just as Hindu religion endows anthropomorphic traits to divinities, so does classical poetry humanise the divine characters and divinise in respect of moral values even the merely human. Even lyrics turn round characters semi-divine like the Yakṣa's spouse in the *Meghadūta*. All the poems and plays of our national poet, Kālidāsa, are moulded in the manner prescribed by theoreticians; and this convention is imaginative *per se*, leaving hardly any room for a faithful reflection of contemporary life as actually lived by different cross-sections of society. Kālidāsa's concern is with the universal in man as well as woman, while the modern Indologist is more in quest of the particular.

Major heroines like Pārvatī, Urvaśī, Śakuntalā, Sudakṣinā, Sītā, Yakṣa-patnī—all constitute the *beau ideal* of womanhood as envisaged by Brahmanical culture.

A woman finds her fulfilment only as a wife or life-partner of a loving husband for whose sake she deems no service or sacrifice too great. This is the ideal of *pativratā* set before woman; and every woman therefore seeks eagerly to marry to get the status of a *pativratā* and *gṛhiṇī.* The woman is the very centre of family life, and womanly love is what keeps the family as a sacred unit. The institution of marriage is highly valued, and it is deemed as a sacred and unavoidable bond or sacrament. Marriage ensures the continuity of genetic purity, and is highly respected as the only way to beget offspring so that one's proper upkeep is ensured for all time in the world of manes even after death. A woman thus commands infinite respect from her husband as the mother of his progeny without whom he cannot hope for salvation either in this world or in the worlds to come after death. Royal heroes, who are also called *rājarṣis* or royal sages by Kālidāsa because of their adherence to these moral or religious values, are seen again and again attempting to secure worthy brides, so that they may have a worthy successor on earth and a dependable aid for their *sadgati* or salvation in the world of *pitṛs* after death. This is true as much of Dilīpa and Daśaratha as of Purūravas and Duṣyanta. Even Lord Śiva is depicted as consenting for marriage with Pārvatī with the intention of securing a son capable of relieving the distress of the gods hands of the demon Tāraka. It thus stands out clearly that Kālidāsa's major heroines are all paragons of moral perfection and mothers of matchless heroes, honouring the traditions of the family (*kula-dharmas*) in such earnest that they would willingly brave any sacrifice in moments of crisis as illustrated in the careers of Sītā and Śakuntalā. There is this streak of spirituality which almost divinises these heroines on earth, while in the case of Pārvatī, it is entirely divine.

Kālidāsa has taken pains to show that even a casual forgetting of the ultimate end of marriage in the craze for sensual love, as in the case of Śakuntalā, Urvaśī and Pārvatī, leads one to disappointment or the worst of trials and tribulations; and only a genuine repentance and *tapas* or austere penance can save them from their sorrow. The place of the legendary queen or goddess in mythology is thus set firmly in the divine order so enchantingly depicted by Kālidāsa; and the point worth nothing is that it is intended as a model for every traditional house wife in India, irrespective of caste and creed. That is why sage Kaṇva's celebrated exhortation to Śakuntalā is concentrated almost entirely on the ways and means of attaining the honoured status of a *gṛhiṇī*.

From this dizzy height of perfect types, Kālidāsa often descends to portray realistically a few other types, who are no heroines in any sense of the term, but who represent the commonly found categories in the prosperous cities as well as the countryside. The cities of Ujjain, Vidiśā, etc. can boast of artistically talented courtesans, who not only entertain the city beaux but also render divine service of dance and music at temples. Their high sophistication (illustrated by *jalakrīḍā*, *keśa-saṁskāra*, etc.) very much contrasts with the guileless innocence of country maids (*Janapada-vadhū-MD*.,I. 16) who are engaged in guarding sugarcane fields (*Śāli -gopyaḥ*"—*Ragh*u. IV. 20) or who are eagerly waiting for their husbands on tour to return (*pathika-vanitāḥ MD*., I. 8), or who are picking flowers on the city outskirts (*puṣpalāvimukhānāṁ*—*MD*., I. 26). The engagements of the *yakṣa-patnī*., viz., composing a verse containing the name of her husband, singing it out to the accompaniment of a lute, depicting him in a colourful portrait, taking to her pet bird, making a peacock dance on its pole, etc. are all reminiscent of what sophisticated women in love were supposed to do as laid down by authorities like Vātsyāyana on Erotics. The reference to *paṇya-strīs* or courtesans by Kālidāsa in the *Meghadūta* has a ring of realistic admiration though it is often camouflaged by typical categorisations of women in love as laid down by authorities in poetics such as *abhisārikā*, *khaṇḍita*, *virahotkaṇṭhitā*, *vāsakasajjā*, *svādhīnapatikā*, etc. To these women sexual love is the be-all and end-all of their lives; and they constitute a class who enjoy the patronage of the princely and affluent city-youths. Kālidāsa has not overplayed or underplayed their role in the city life of his time. This class of women enjoy all the pleasures of wealth, like drinking and sex.

Apart from these categories, we have a third category of women characters in Kālidāsa's works. viz. the category of *sakhī*-s or handmaids. In the conventional life of queens in royal harems, the handmaids, recruited mostly for the sake of their looks and artistic talents, constituted an important section. Hence, it is natural that in the only play which is exclusively set on our earth and depicts historical characters, viz. *Mālvikāgnimitra*, the heroine herself for the most part of the play is shown as acting the part of a handmaid. Each of the queens is having her handmaid not only in this play, but in all the plays of Kālidāsa. Bharata's dramatic convention demands that no royal character should appear singly; and Kālidāsa has followed this convention strictly. Yet it is to his credit that he has succeeded in a large measure in individualising the handmaids—so much so that Priyaṁvada, the sweet-tongued and intelligent companion of Śakuntalā, is a foil to Anasūyā, the other companion, who is more or less guileless and straightforward. The same is true of Bakulāvalikā, Nipuṇikā, etc. in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*. Even Pārvatī in the *Kumārasambhava* has her handmaid Vijayā. These handmaids are all characterised as expert in several artistic accomplishments, and they serve the heroines as their mouthpieces. Though enlisted for doing odd jobs, none of them show any meanness or discontent or vile nature, which shows how Kālidāsa had almost shut his eyes to grim reality or the seamy side of life.

In the midst of all this mass of conventional characters, one woman character which rises to an outstanding height is Paṇḍitā Kauśikī in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*. For once, Kālidāsa has freed himself from the shackles of dramaturgic rules of his day and shown how a single woman, though widowed early, and though made to lose her guardian brother too in a skirmish with robbers, did persevere and pursue her own strategy to a successful completion. By heredity, she is the daughter of a minister. And she is highly educated in all the arts and sciences of her day. She assumed early the disguise of a nun (*parivrājikā*), finds her way into Queen Dhāriṇī's establishment and carves out for herself the place of an honoured counsellor in Agnimitra's palace. This she does in order to be close to her ward Mālavikā, now suffering the indignity of a handmaid of Queen Dhāriṇī. Her ward was really a Princess of Vidarbha, a sister of Prince Mādhavasena and was lost by her earlier on her way to Agnimitra's city in the skirmish with robbers. This wise Kauśikī reminds us often of the sagacious Cāṇakya in the play *Mudrārākṣasa*. Such is the sharpness of her intellect and her deep-laid plan that it cannot be countered by even the combined manouvres of the two queens of Agnimitra—Dharīṇī and Irāvatī—because the plans are so subtle and escape penetration. Though in this play, critics often aver that the jester or *vidūṣaka* has played a major part in bringing the King's love for Mālavikā to a successful completion, the truth is that the jester by himself could have done nothing but for the complicity of Kauśikī from the beginning till the end of the play. The fighting of the two dance-masters leads to the stage performance of Mālavikā, only because of Kauśikī's insistence on practical demonstration of the skill of pupils. Kālidāsa has rightly described Kauśikī in the company of Dhāriṇī as no less than the spiritual lore (of the Upaniṣads) emobodied, alongside of the triple Veda :—

> *'maṅgalālaṅkṛtā bhāti kauśikyā yati-veṣayā/*
> *trayī vigrahavatyeva samamadhyātma-*
> *vidyayā//*
> *Mālavikāgnimitra*, I. 14.

That is the high status which a woman could attain, as envisaged by Kālidāsa, in the teeth of the worst environment, provided she had a noble heredity and could get the best education available for the royalty. No achievement was barred to a woman, simply because of her sex. She could become a mendicant nun, commanding the respect even of the king and his queens. Similarly, we have the learned and staid Gautamī in the *Śākuntala* who holds the office of maintaining the discipline of the hermitage strictly.

Before closing this account, we should note two incidents in Kālidāsa which shed light on the right of women to inherit property after the death of their husbands. The first comes casually in the *Śākuntala*. News comes to King Duṣyanta that a wealthy subject of his—Dhanamitra by name—had died without a successor. The king, now under a strong wave of repentance for having deserted Śakuntalā, the would-be mother of his own successor to the throne, decrees that among the several women in the harem of the merchant, if any woman is found pregnant by chance, Dhanamitra's property should be handed over to her on behalf of the issue to be born. This shows how the broad law of the land held the woman's right to inherit property on behalf of her son to be born. This very idea is again echoed in the last canto of the poem *Raghuvaṁśa*. When the last of the solar kings, the dissolute Agnivarṇa dies issueless, the ministers decide that the pregnant queen should receive the holy consecration of kingship on behalf of her baby in the womb.

Thus, we find that Kālidāsa's treatment of women is in conformity with the cultural and sacred traditions of the land on the one hand and with the literary conventions of classical literature on the other. To read actual historical facts about the status and function of women in particular would not be very proper in these literary works. Yet we can glean certain relevant tendencies universally valid. Women were respected for their nobility of birth as well as family responsibilities such as bringing up of children as well as academic learning. No work was deemed inferior for even a queen like Sītā. A princess by birth could gladly discharge a handmaid's duties as in the case of Mālavikā. They had equal opportunities with men for education in secular sciences as well as spiritual lore. In general, however, it might be said that a large part of women's lives was devoted to please their partners in love and as mothers of worthy progeny. Occasionally, the highest stage of *parivrājikā* was also open to them.

Kālidāsa shows no keenness in dwelling upon the caste distinctions of women. All the women characters of Kālidāsa may be said to be almost casteless. Similarly, Kālidāsa has not depicted any aged characters at length. The only aged lady depicted is the mythical Dākṣayaṇī, the spouse of sage Marīci in the last act of the Śakuntalā. And, the majority of the women fall into the accepted categories of *mugdhā*, *prauḍhā* and *pragalbhā*, a categorisation applicable only to the romantic passion governing their personalities. Yet even Śakuntalā, a guileless girl of the hermitage, rises to her full stature when she boldly repudiates the charge of a loose woman hurled against her by the king and closely argues with him to vindicate her secret marriage. That shows how a self-respecting woman would react even in the worst of situations, without losing her courage or presence of mind. A woman could be bold and have faith in her own purity of character and would not be meek and submissive beyond a limit. It is also interesting to note that in Kālidāsa there is no woman character who commits or even thinks of suicide or *satī*. On the other hand, Kālidāsa holds the balance even by showing how on the premature demise of a loving queen like Indumatī, a king like Aja threw himself to death in the confluence of Gaṅgā and Yamunā after seeing his son Daśaratha on the throne. This shows how Kālidāsa's attitude towards woman was more on the side of adoration than of disparagement. That is why he dwells at length on the celebration of *svayaṁvara* or marriage by self-choice as one of the privileges of princesses. Another factor which invites our attention is the keenness of Kālidāsa in almost going out of his way to contrive situations where women are deeply devoted to religious observances. This is true as much of the dowager-queen in the *Śākuntala* who performs the *putra-piṇḍāraka-vrata* as of the queen Auśīnarī in the *Vikramorvaśīya* who gets busy with a *pati-prasādana-vrata*. Indeed, the *aśoka-dohada* incident in the *Mālavikāgnimitra* too is almost having a religious overtone. Thus it might be stated that on the whole, women were devotedly discharging age-old religious traditions. In a word, they were looked upon by their loving husbands as combining the roles of a mistress of house, counsellor, friend and pupil in fine arts.

gṛhiṇī sacivaḥ sakhī mithaḥ priyaśiṣyā latite
kalāvidhau (*Raghuvaṁśa*, VIII. 67).

(From 'Position and Status of Women in Ancient India', Vol.I B. H. U., Varanasi, 1968.)

Appendix 6

The Religion of Kālidāsa

I

Following Sir William Jones, Kālidāsa has often been regarded as the Shakespeare of India as if there can be no higher compliment to the greatest of Indian poets. But Shakespeare's tragic vision is overburdened by the problem of evil while Kālidāsa is refreshingly religious, inheriting the wisdom of poet-sages like Vālmīki and Vyāsa. There is an unbroken chain of human endeavour and divine interposition connecting not only the main plots of his plays as well as poems, but even the subplots or episodes therein. Though like Shakespeare, Kālidāsa too can mingle sublimity with pathos, bitterness with joy and peace and love, intellectual subtlety and delirium and the cryptic utterances of inspired wisdom, Kālidāsa has firm religious convictions and has imbibed the essence of the wisdom of Vedanta as well as Sankhya, Yoga as well as the epics. He is a detached and amused observer of the Human Comedy. He seems to be steeped in *śṛṅgāra*, but all the time he is more than alive to the goal of *śānta* or tranquillity.

No doubt we have the best outpourings of transcendental wisdom in the Upaniṣads; and the Gītā embodies them all in a way accessible even to the man at large. But they are essentially *śāstra* or scriptural texts demanding a keen intellect on the part of the reader. Their truths are as subtle as they are profound, and great *ācāryas* are needed to bring out their hidden message. Having assimilated them all, Kālidāsa recreates them in the form of poems and plays, and captures the hearts of his readers, inculcating in them the religious values in the manner of a beloved wife, as the Indian writers choose to put it. Sunlight has its merits galore; but moonlight too has its charm, though it is but reflected sunlight. Indian critics view poetry as moonlight which reflects the sunlight of *śāstra* in a charming and appealing way.

II

The word for 'religion' in Sanskrit is *sanātana-dharma* or perennial wisdom relating to the realm of the imperceptible (*atīndriya*). Absolute Reality, by definition, is the immutable one conceived as the godhead by religion to achieve the twin goals of *bhoga* (a happy life) and *mokṣa* (emancipation) by man who is caught in the coils of *māyā* or illusion. One who sees the world as illusion is the sage or wise man; but even he takes life seriously, because it is real as far as it goes. But the common run of humanity is ignorant of this in its daily round of activity. But our business is to wake up. We have to find ways in which to detect the whole of reality in the one illusory part to which our self-centred consciousness permits us to see. Kālidāsa's heroines and heroes are all denizens of two worlds—one illusory and the other real. They find a way of living in the world, while not being of it. This sense of timelessness or eternity is the consummation which each of his works leads us to, each in its own way.

III

Let us take his masterpiece—*Śākuntala*. It concludes with the prayer one can least expect from the hero especially when the trials and tribulations are all over and the cup of his happiness is full:—

> May omnipresent Lord Śiva vouchsafe that I shall have no rebirth, Śiva who is ever accompanied by Śaktī !
> (*mamāpi ca kṣapayatu nīlalohitaḥ*
> *punarbhavaṁ parigata-śaktirātmabhūḥ*)

Having tasted the joys of the earth as well as heaven, having fulfilled his mission of life with a sense of dedication, what a religious Indian wishes for is deliverance from the cycle of re-birth. That indeed is the *summum bonum* or realisation from within of one's own essential identity with the Absolute, a realisation which comes only when one can see life steadily and see it whole. This yearning towards the Absolute, this aspiration to oneness and wholeness, this hope for perfection, is the fountainhead of the poetic inspiration of Kālidāsa. His poetic spirit apprehends the universe as a sort of matter-spirit continuum, extending into the mythology of gods and demons with divine sages as intermediaries.

IV

Kālidāsa finds occasions to hymn the praise of the purānic *trimūrtis* in his poems. Thus in the *Kumārasaṁbhava* (canto II) we have the praise of Brahma which may be taken as an epitome of all Indian thought on the Godhead:—

> The triple forms of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva are but manifestations of one Absolute. The one before creation himself becomes the many through interaction of the three fundamental aspects (*guṇas*) of Nature, viz. *sattva* (purity), *rajas* (dynamism) and *tamas*(darkness). The first leads to creation, the second explains preservation and the third destruction. All these three aspects are the illustrations of the one Infinite Absolute only. He is *prakṛti*

and He is *puruṣa* too; He underlies all the polarities of solid and liquid, massive and subtle, light and heavy, the visible and the invisible, the knower and the known, the rite and its fruit, the sacrificer and the oblation, the thinker and the thought, the cause and the effect, the male and the female. He is the uncaused. First cause, the undestroyed destroyer and the unlorded overlord (verses 4-15). Such is the summary of the Upanisads.

Manmatha, the god of love sights Śiva in his Yogic pose. Kālidāsa's poetry reaches its height here (III 44-50). Śiva is the perfect Yogin, with all sense-activities withdrawn with breath stopped and absorbed in introspective contemplation. He appears like a steady flame unshaken even in a storm. Radiance issues forth all around his head. He is the Immutable one seeing himself within himself. Thus *seśvara-Sāṅkhya, Pātanjala-Yoga* and *Upaniṣadic vedānta*—all mingle in the Purāṇic figure of Lord Śiva. This is his fundamental aspect of *vairāgya* or asceticism. But God's universality encompasses the opposite of it too. Śiva, the perfect Yogin, is also the passionate paramour of Pārvatī, his passion so great that he makes her half his body.

This is the inmost truth which popular expositions of *purāṇas* usually miss, and Kālidāsa's genius brings out most illuminatingly. The three invocations with which his play begin are marvels of poetic insight and spiritual significance. They harmonise the pathways (Yogas) of *jñāna* (knowledge), *karma* (action) and *bhakti* (devotion) leading to the realisation of the supreme Godhead, or Śiva, the chosen deity (*iṣṭadevatā*) of the poet. In Kālidāsa's vision, Śiva may be clad only in an elephant-hide; but his is the singular Omnipotence and possession of all the wealth in all the universe, a wealth meant ever to be showered on his devotees. He is the perfect Yogin and the perfect lover, He is the upholder of the universe in His eight visible forms of Nautre and yet He has no egoism. The right religious way (*sanmārga*) is the result of only His grace (*Mālavikāgnimitra*, I .1).

The Upaniṣads speak of him as the One *puruṣa* transcending the earth and heaven. The title 'Lord' is true exclusively of him alone. He is sought within themselves by those who are after deliverance by the methods of Yoga involving breath-control and so on. He is the one constant Absolute and yet so easily within one's reach, if only approached with a steady devotion or *sthira bhakti*(*Vikramorvaśīya*, I. 1.).

The ignorant think that the highest God Śiva is imperceptible. But the truth is that he is even perceived by all the senses and by the mind of man because he is immanent in this universe all the time. Water, fire, the sacrifice, the sun and the moon, the sky, the earth and the air—are the eight Perceptible limbs of the body of Śiva (*Śākuntala* I. 1.).

Though Śiva is Kālidāsa's favourite deity, he takes care to bestow equal praise on Brahma as well as Viṣṇu in his epics. As we saw already, the former is eulogised in the *Kumārasambhava* and Viṣṇu is eulogised in even more effusive terms in the *Raghuvaṁśa* (canto X. 16-32). The points stressed are identical in all these hymns of praise: divine power manifested in the creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe, the one becoming the Trinity and then the multiple universe. Transcendence as well as immanence of the Godhead, His remote as well as indwelling nature, infinite grace and eternal existence, omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence, uncaused causation of all else, the one destination of all scriptural sayings and rituals, combining paradoxical traits like un-born nature and birth, desirelessness and destruction of evil ones, sleep and wakefulness, His equal concern in enjoyment as well as renunciation, in protecting the good and in remaining neutral. But what is most striking is the fact that Kālidāsa has no doubt

Appendix 7

Kālidāsa in the Eyes of Kuntaka

There is perhaps no literary theorist in Sanskrit other than Kuntaka who has devoted so much of his attention to an inductive analysis of poetic beauty as derived from a perceptive and penetrating study of all the plays and poems of Kālidāsa. Other writers, including Ānandavardhana, often quote stray verses, and exceptionally, long passages too as illustrating their divisions of *dhvani, alaṅkāra, guṇa* etc. But Kuntaka is the only writer who concerns himself with the task of assessing the poems and plays of Kālidāsa as whole units, revealing the masterpoet's genius in conception as well as execution of the several strands that go to constitute the whole. This may be regarded as the critical norm of 'unity of action and tone' fused into one, a norm discovered for the first time by Kuntaka and successfully applied by him to Kālidāsa's works. What he values most is the streak of originality or inventive power even in the handling of old incidents to serve an aesthetic purpose.

Let us now see how Kuntaka views Kālidāsa's masterpiece, the *Śākuntala*. At first sight, it seems to be based on the well-known *upākhayāna* or tale of Śakuntala as found in the *Mahābhārata*. But the art of Kālidāsa is seen in the bold and adroit changes he makes in the story while dramatizing it. The purpose of the change, as Kuntaka points out, is aesthetic. When a poet turns to handle well-known stories of the past, he should not mechanically reproduce it in a new form. He should first select only such tales as are conducive to the delineation of *rasas* and *bhāvas* in a way appealing to readers in a strikingly original fashion. To obtain such a wonderful aesthetic effect, the poet will introduce new scenes to serve his purpose, and make his characters appear quite novel. It is like a painter's, says Kuntaka, adding new touches of his own to an old painting.

Most literary critics, Indian and Western, emphasize Duṣyanta's amnesia or slip of memory as intended by Kālidāsa in the rejection scene. They take the surface view of the matter that Śakuntalā is rejected because the hero does not recognise her when she appears before him in his palace because of the infallible curse of the irate sage Durvāsas. This is, however, question of probing the inmost depths underlying the psychology of the great hero Duṣyanta as conceived by Kālidāsa. Kuntaka does not think that Kālidāsa could have made his hero a wayward, absentminded and forgetful womaniser. The curse is only an external motif and it cannot change the inmost nature of a man; at best, it can give an occasion for the manifestation of a trait which is already ingrained in a man's personality. The question, as Kuntaka thinks, is simply this: was Duṣyanta very forgetful by nature or most unforgetful ? If loss of memory is only an accident, then there is a possibility of its coming back to normality, sooner than later. Otherwise, if it is a deep part of his nature, he can never remember Śakuntalā to such an extent that he might die love-lorn without her. Hence, Kālidāsa shows searchingly the genius of Kālidāsa in delineating the character of Duṣyanta in such a novel way that even while apparently about to reject Śakuntala, Duṣyanta is not forgetful of his deep attachments in love. That is why the fourth act begins with the song of Haṁsapādikā—*ramyāṁ vīkṣya...* - which stirs the hidden springs of memory in Duṣyanta. Kuntaka comments that though his memory has been very temporarily blacked out by the infallible power of the curse, deep down in his mind we do notice that traces are still left of the old love and this is the real reason of his upset or agony. Kuntaka adds :—

> Here the beauty of such a recollection of Śakuntala (so deep down in the layers of his subconscious), at once guileless and charming appeals very much to the hearts of the connoisseurs.
> (*atra saṁmugdha-subhaga-menakānandinī-smaraṇa-lekhā-lāvaṇyamanyadeva camatkāra-kāraṇaṁ sahṛdayānāṁ samuddyotate*)...
>
> —*Vakroktijivita*, Ed. K. Krishnamoorthy, Dharwad, 1977, p. 250)

The *paryutsukhībhāva* of Duṣyanta in the verse has been shown first by Kuntaka as relating to the memory of the hero's unfading love for Śakuntalā, though he cannot, because of the curse, connect that remembered Śakuntalā with the person appearing shortly before him. This Kuntaka's psychological analysis is most perceptive and penetrating as well as original. He further strengthens it by showing how the whole of the VI Act which externally marks the end of the curse, is internally concerned with laying bare the intense self-censure and remorse of the hero for his unpardonable mistake and with showing the intensity of his love-lorn state, now that he is away from her. The recovery of the ring is but an external symbol to portray this inner psychological state of the king, panting to unite with Śakuntalā. And it is the finest flower of Kālidāsa's genius, since not even a remote semblance of it has any place in the epic tale. Even like Purūravas, Duṣyanta is in a mad frenzy and reviling the bee for daring to touch the red lip of his beloved, the same bee which he had once envied before his consummation of love. Kuntaka observes:—

> If this exquisite episode invented by the genius of the poet were not to be there in the play, the unbearable fact of the king's forgetting his wife without any reason would have become a source of blemish as much in the play as in the original story.
>
> (*Ibid.*, p. 544)

I think, it is only Kuntaka, in the history of Indian criticism, who is able to show how delineation of hidden springs of character is effected by a happily conceived symbolic image, such as that of the bee in the VI Act of the *Śākuntala*.

It is again from this strikingly novel point of view that Kuntaka attempts to assess the best act in the *Vikramorvaśīya*. Not all acts can be equally beautiful. In his view, only that which serves best as the sporting-ground for the play of the ruling *rasa* deserves to rank as the most beautiful. It is only in the madness spectacle conceived originally by the genius of Kālidāsa, in all its frenzy of love-in-separation, that we see the climax of beauty. The IV Act rises high above the other acts like a peak because of the diverse symbolic images, following closely one behind the other, in a most enthralling sequence—all working up to the agonizing pangs of love-in-separation. Kuntaka illustrates the images of the cloud, the peacock, the swan, the river etc.—all serving this common purpose. Kuntaka's criticism from the perspective of the ruling sentiment thus reveals new beauties in a work taken as a whole.

Applying this norm of *rasa* in a whole *prabandha*, naturally, *Mālavikāgnimitra* will suffer in comparison; and Kuntaka is wisely silent about it. His silence about this play is no less eloquent than his appreciation of the other two plays. The appeal of *vipralambha-śṛṅgāra* is deeper and finer than that of *sambhoga-śṛṅgāra*. This is a truth brought out illuminatingly for the first time by Kuntaka.

This total view of a work highlighting each of its several constituent elements is the keynote of Kuntaka's criticism and underlies his appreciation of Kālidāsa as

> *paramārtha-sarasa-sarasvatī-sarvasvāyamāna-*
> *pratibhā-vidhāna-kuśala.*

His pointed reference to the *śloka*, viz. *bharturmitraṁ...* (96) in the *Meghadūta* as embodying suggested implications justifying the poem's being called by that name is indeed as sensitive as it is revealing. It is in this verse that the role of the cloud as a universal love-messenger is fully brought out as well as the cloud's intimate friendship with the Yakṣa, now torn from his mate. It is his dearest friend's reassuring message of lasting love and hope of reunion in the near future which is so carefully borne by him all the way to be transmitted to the *virahiṇī* in the most poetic or persuasive manner, without shocking her in the least and ensuring her confidence. Both the messenger and the love-message are artistically worked into the fabric of this gem of a single verse; Kuntaka's literary taste is so beautifully instanced in his happy and illuminating comments on that verse in the very beginning of his work (*Ibid*., p. 189):

> *atra yaḥ padārthapurispandaḥ kavinopanibaddhaḥ*
> *prabandhasya Meghadūtatve paramārthataḥ*
> *sa eva jīvitamiti sutarāṁ sahṛdaya-*
> *hṛdayāhlādakārī.*

In his assessment of the *Raghuvaṁśa*, Kuntaka brings out one more aspect fundamental to all criticism, viz., the significance of parts in relation to the whole. While all theorists are agreed on the fact that an ornate epic (*mahākāvya*) should contain poetic descriptions of set themes like city, ocean, water-sports etc., none of them show any direct relation between the main theme and these conventional descriptions at length. It is only Kuntaka who subjects the *Raghuvaṁśa* to such a keen literary analysis. In his analysis it emerges how the seemingly irrelevant description of Daśaratha's hunting expedition becomes in fact the seed or starting point of a curse which acts almost as a boon to the sonless Daśaratha; and prepares the ground for the birth of his sons. So also is the apparent digression of *jala-krīḍā* or water-sport by Kuśa. His loss of the precious ornament in the river, its being caught by the nāga-princess Kumudvati at play in the netherworld, the Nāga king's discomfiture and presentation of the ornament along with Kumudvati to him, are so skilfully woven into the narrative that there is a structural continuity underlying the seemingly disparate descriptions of set themes. As Kuntaka pointedly observes at the end of his review of such descriptions in the *Raghuvaṁśa*:—

jalakrīḍadikākhyānamapi sandarbhasundaraṁ/
prabandhasya kathāprāṇaparispandaparaṁ
sukhaṁ //

It will be seen how Kuntaka derives inductively his general rule or poetic norm that all descriptions must serve the progress of the narrative directly or indirectly, and should not be indulged in excess, for their own sake. These norms were already framed by Ānandavardhana. But their first and best interpreter with happily chosen examples from Kālidāsa is undoubtedly Kuntaka.

Similarly, in respect of the *Kumārasambhava* too, Kuntaka is the first critic to draw our attention to the hidden structural threads that bind into a unity the several cantos with apparently disconnected themes. The initial description at length of the divine beauty of Pārvatī, her worshipful service to Śiva, the Creator's advice to gods worsted by the redoubtable demon

Tāraka, Cupid supported by Vasanta banking on the beauty of Pārvatī and faring the worst destruction in his attempt to humble Śiva, the lament of the widowed Rati, the disappointed Pārvatī's recourse to askegis (*tapasyā*) the dialogue between Pārvatī and Śiva in the disguise of a student, the divine sages asking king Himavān, on behalf of Śiva, to give his daughter in marriage, and finally the bliss of marriage—these are all mutually linked together into a most enchanting sequential synthesis, the story taking strikingly unexpected turns every other moment:

> *prakaraṇāni paurvāparya-paryavasita-sundara-samāveśa-saṁbandha-bandhurāṇi rāmaṇīyaka-dhārāmadhirohanti. (Ibid., p. 273).*

Thus we see Kuntaka as the first Indian practical literary critic with telling examples from Kālidāsa for his most aesthethically acute analyses.

Kuntaka is again seen at his best in devising new *guṇas* or literary excellences associated with his three *mārgas* or styles. If Kuntaka sings the praise of his *sukumāra-mārga* or the delicate and charming style, it is because he sees Kālidāsa as its best exponent. All the *guṇas* of that style, not only the traditionally recognised ones, but also the newly discovered ones by Kuntaka like *lāvaṇya* and *ābhijātya*—all become meaningful only in the context of the relevant graces that occur in Kālidāsa's poetry. If Bhāmaha gives the definition of *mādhurya* or sweetness as:

> *śravyaṁ nātisamastārthaśabdaṁ madhuramiṣyate*
> *(reading according to Somesvara's Śanketa on Kāvyaprakāśa)*

One might illustrate it from any verse of any poet. But when Kuntaka defines *lāvaṇya* 'graceful harm' of the *sukumāra* style as:

> *varṇavinyāsavicchittipadasandhānasaṁpadā/*
> *svalpayā bandhasaundaryaṁ lāvaṇyamabhīdhīyate//*
> *(Ibid., 1. 32)*

The definition itself appears to be derived from the example of Kālidāsa's verse which embodies a structural perfection of choice syllabic selection and euphonic combination of words running into each other warmly; e.g.,

snānārdramukteṣvanudhūpavāsaṁ
vinyastasāyatanamallikeṣu /
kāmo vasantātyayamandavīryaḥ
keśeṣu lebhe balamaṅganānāṁ //
(Raghuvaṁśa, XVI. 50)

This is a kind of word-music which can only be felt and hardly described in words:—

atra sanniveśasaundaryamahimā sahṛdaya-
saṁvedyo na vyapadeṣṭuṁ pāryate. (op. cit.)

The same *lāvaṇya-guṇa* in the brilliant style of *vicitramārga* will present words with *visargas* in tact and shorts followed by conjunct consonants:

atrāluptavisargāntaiḥ padaiḥ protaiḥ parasparaṁ /
hrasvaiḥ saṁyogapūrvaiśca lāvaṇyamatiricyate //
(Ibid., I. 47)

The example for this is naturally, not from Kālidāsa. But two of the earliest commentators of the *Kāvyaprakāśa* viz., Rucaka and Someśvara both quote this definition of Kuntaka to indicate that Mammaṭa's *doṣas* like *upahata-lupta-visarga* have been devised to characterise instances lacking in *lāvaṇya*. This shows how Kuntaka's analysis was accepted with deference even by a master theorist like Mammaṭa.

The same observation applies equally well to *ābhijātya* or classical perfection spoken of as another *guṇa* by Kuntaka, for the first time, of his *mārgas*. The excellence in question is illustrated in the lines:

jyotirlekhāvalayi galitaṁ yasya barhaṁ bhavānī /
putraprītya kuvalayadalaprāpi karṇe karoti //
(Meghadūta, 44)

The points illustrated are smooth feel on the ear (*śrutipeśalatā*), easy comprehension (*susparśaniva cetasā)* and a naturally sparkling shade of loveliness (*svabhāva-masṛṇa-cchāyain*) as listed in I.33. These, it will be seen, relate to pleasing diction of which Kālidāsa alone is the supreme master.

Kuntaka's treatment of the 'delicate' style of Kālidāsa in conformity with the tender sentiments intended shows him indeed as one of the greatest admirers of Kālidāsa. But his admiration is always substantiated by a perceptive analysis of the innumerable shades of beauty that go effortlessly into the making of Kālidāsa's limpid poetry. It is never blind or unreasoned. When he finds something jarring in Kālidāsa, Kuntaka is not slow to point it out without any hesitation. He daringly shows in three instances how the defect of impropriety or *anaucitya* smudges even the great master's creations, which are otherwise paragons of spotless purity and perfection.

The instances are these:

(1) When Rāma tells Sītā on their way back to Ayodhyā in the *puṣpaka-vimāna* that Sumantra could not bear to see him doff his royal robes and don the ascetic's raiment and burst into tears exclaiming-"O Kaikeyī, your evil intent is fulfilled"! (*kaikeyī, kāmāḥ phalitāstaveti—op. cit.* p. 71). This is unbecoming in the mouth of the noble Rāma, because he cannot be thought to harbour any mean thought or remember such an incident reflecting on the manners of Kaikeyī.

(2) Like a single burnt spot spoiling a whole silken garment, impropriety will mar the whole poem's beauty. For example, when the noble Dilīpa, in his conversation with the lion inadvertently admits that he might have spared his own life by sacrificing the cow now caught by the lion and by appearing the anger of his *guru* by gifting him away a whole herd of such cows, if Nandinī

were to be an ordinary cow. On the contrary, she is extraordinary, the veritable daughter of the divine Kāmadhenu! So he cannot think of it! Kuntaka convincingly shows that what is involved here is a principle, and not an individual cow, whether ordinary or extraordinary. If for the ideal of protecting his *guru's* cow, he is not ready to part with his own life, Dilīpa's stature will be reduced to that of a commoner. That is what has actually happened.

(3) In the *Kumārasambhava* (III. 7), Cupid boasts before his master Indra, that he is ready to make any woman of his choice run to his arms with passion, even if it be the most celebrated *pativrata* or chaste married, lady. The idea, certainly is not complimentary to the character of Indra, the King of Gods. How can such an exalted personage be such a profligate, casting eyes on wedded wives of others?

We might ask why Kuntaka chooses Kālidāsa himself even for examples of literary flaws like indecency. Kuntaka's answer is most opposite:

> *etacca etasyaiva mahākaveh sahaja-saukumārya-*
> *mudrita-sūkti-parispanda-saundaryasya*
> *paryālocyate, na punaranyeṣāṁ āhārya-*
> *mātra-kāvya-karana-kauśala-ślāghināṁ.*
>
> *(Ibid., p. 72).*

Only Kālidāsa writes with artistic vision which is spontaneous; others are poets by labour and their creations are artificial and not spontaneous. Hence, the latter will not stand a keen analysis of the type attempted by Kuntaka even for a while. In Kālidāsa, on the other hand, his general output is so perfectly pure that even the slightest impropriety is at once noticed. But it does not mean that his poetry is full of blemishes. The rule is that it is flawless; and its defects are very very exceptional and few.

By now it would have been noticed that Kuntaka's literary analysis and appraisal are themselves couched in such lively words that he is a creative critic; his writing raises criticism itself to the rank of literature. Now I might conclude my review of Kuntaka in the concluding words of Someśvara, the author of the *Saṅketa* on the *Kāvyaprakāśa*:—

> Winds take away the best scented pollen from the celestral tree and scatter them on all sides, only to cause torment to the eyes of people. What is their use? On the other hand, the bee collects sweet honey from flowers on all sides, enjoys it first, and then transmits it to others, adding delight to their palate. The bee indeed deserves praise!

Kālidāsa's verses are the flowers; Kuntaka is the bee with good taste, he can make other readers too delight in Kālidāsa's poetry:—

> *svīkṛtya kalpataruto marutaḥ parāgaṁ*
> *dṛṣṭeḥ kṣatiṁ vidadhate jagato'pi kiṁ taiḥ /*
> *bhṛṅgaḥ kṛtī tu paritaḥ sumanomukhebhyaḥ*
> *pītaṁ madhūdvamati yena mudaṁ karoti //*

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